The Artist as Educator: An examination of the relationship between artistic practice and pedagogy within contemporary gallery education

Emily Pringle

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship between artistic practice and pedagogy and the role of artist educators in galleries. It interrogates selected artists' and education curators' constructions of 'artists' in terms of their knowledge, skills and experience. It considers how these individuals perceive artists function as gallery educators and the influence of gallery context on their pedagogic practice. This qualitative research is designed as interlocking, tiered case studies; five artist educators operate within the community education programme at Tate Modern, London. Data comprises interviews and observations. A common focus on exploratory and reflective processes within research, art practice and learning is identified. The named participant researchers' active involvement in developing the research is outlined.

These artists are constructed as 'conceptual investigators' who possess intellectual and problem-solving expertise. Art practice and artist-led pedagogy are identified as corresponding experiential meaning making processes. The analysis reveals that artist educators draw on their experiences of making and looking at art and their artistic skills (which include looking, questioning and reflecting) when working in the gallery. To enable learners to connect with artworks, artist educators seek to 'teach' these skills through dialogic exchange, rather than transmit knowledge. In doing so they occupy multiple roles; facilitator, co-learner and instructor primarily, although they typically resist identifying themselves as teachers. Art practice informs Tate Modern's sanctioned education methodology, which in turn shapes artist educators' pedagogy. The artist educators' approach supports the community programme's aims to further learner engagement, but occupies an uncertain place within the institution.

The findings contribute to an understanding of how the multifaceted pedagogic relationship between artist educators, learners and artworks in the gallery is shaped by the educators' status as artists. This relationship is represented in the devised framework of Meaning Making in the Gallery.

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1. The context and rationale for the thesis

1.1 Introduction

> I am standing in the gallery watching the artist educator engaging with the group of adult learners who are first-time visitors to the gallery. She is asking questions and encouraging participants to look carefully at the painting and share their thoughts. Individuals are voicing different opinions and discussing how the work has been made. Varied meanings are emerging and the artist educator draws the learners back to the art work (Research Journal entry. 23rd May 2003).

This description of part of an education session at Tate Modern is indicative of the practice under investigation in this thesis. The context for my research is an area within the field of gallery education; its focus is artist-led pedagogic practice in modern and contemporary art galleries.

Gallery education has developed and expanded considerably in the last ten years, although the practice has existed since the nineteenth century in the UK (McClellan, 2003). Particularly since the early 1970s artists have worked in an educational capacity in galleries and as artists in residence in formal education contexts. The use of artist educators is now commonplace in art galleries and artist-led pedagogy has been described as 'a powerful focus for all kinds of applied skills and learning' (Sekules, 2003: 146). However, recognised also is the need to understand this practice and the activities of artist educators (*Ibid*, 2003).

Gallery education is a dynamic and expanding area, which accommodates various, and at times, conflicting agendas. As the field has grown, models of effective pedagogy have emerged which operate within, and negotiate between, the overlapping spheres of art practice, curatorial programming and formal and informal education. The practice is also affected by policy initiatives relating to the cultural sector and education more widely (Luckett, 1985). Recent years have seen a government focus on increasing educational capacity in the cultural sector (Taylor, 2006), whilst specific programmes promote the use of artists as educators

(www.creative-partnerships.com). These initiatives reflect policy makers' perceptions that access to galleries can impact on people's educational and social circumstances positively. Equally, policy makers recognise that creativity in education engenders a more flexible and able workforce and hence contributes to economic and cultural development (Craft, 2005). Within this policy discourse, artist-led pedagogy is perceived to support creative teaching and benefit learners (NACCCE, 1999), yet the practice itself is relatively under-researched (Harland *et al*, 2005, Xanthoudaki *et al*, 2003).

My thesis is timely, as it contributes to the field of education in cultural spaces by explicating the role of artists as educators in galleries. But although the thesis emerges from current historical, social and policy contexts, its relevance transcends them, since its findings are apposite to international contexts and to differing policy scenarios. The investigation illuminates how and why the relationship between artistic practice and pedagogy translates into particular forms of engagement between art practitioners, learners, artworks and the gallery itself. It starts by addressing how particular artists and education curators working on a community education programme in a gallery construct 'artists', in terms of their knowledge, skills and experience. Building on this framing, the thesis examines how these individuals see artists functioning as gallery educators and the influence of gallery context on their practice. The thesis is investigating how selected individuals perceive artists teach primarily, although it also considers learning in the gallery from the artists' perspective. For reasons outlined in chapter three, I do not examine learners' perceptions.

1.2 The context for this study: A personal motivation

The origins of this thesis lie in my experience as a visual artist who worked for several years devising and facilitating education activities in various art galleries. I also managed an education programme at a contemporary gallery in London and currently research education programmes for galleries and other arts organisations. Engaging

in these activities has led me to question the relationship between artistic practice and pedagogy and how this is revealed in particular gallery education scenarios.

As an artist educator in the gallery, the particularities of my artistic practice inform my pedagogic activities. My relationship with learners and artworks is shaped by the conceptual and critical approaches I bring to my artistic practice. This, in turn, is influenced by the education I received at art school, the example set by artists I admire and my experiences as a practising artist. This research has emerged from my attempts to understand whether, as a professional artist (that is, someone who studied at art school and has a developed artistic practice) I have specific knowledge and experience, a certain set of skills and an approach to investigating works of art that translates into a particular form of engagement with artworks and participants in the contemporary art gallery.

Starting this thesis I saw this engagement as a tripartite encounter that aims to achieve particular pedagogic outcomes. This encounter is informed by constructing works of art as 'specific things, made by specific people, using particular technical resources, for specific (if often very complex) reasons' (Harrison, 1984:17). Hence my role as artist educator in the gallery is to enable learners to engage with specific artworks in order to interrogate how, why and for what reasons an art object exists as it does. The focus is on gaining understanding of the work, but ostensibly I am not there as an expert to impart a fixed body of knowledge about the artwork, or provide authoritative or comprehensive answers. Rather, I encourage learners to draw on their knowledge and experience and, through a process of questioning and dialogue, make a meaningful connection with the artwork for themselves.

What constitutes a 'meaningful' connection is an ongoing question I return to in this thesis. It is a source of tension, since it problematises where the meaning of an art object is located and who has authority to provide or validate that meaning. Other issues have arisen over the course of the research which have informed and changed

my understanding of the encounter between learner, artwork and artist educator. I have become aware of the intricacy and limitations of the practice.

1.3 Developing the research questions

Previous research into learning and teaching in galleries has identified a collaborative or co-learning role for artist educators (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2005, Charman & Ross, 2005, Fuirer, 2005). I recognise this construction as corresponding with some of my experiences as an educator in galleries; my perception is that artists do learn alongside participants sharing and developing new knowledge together at times. Yet these same experiences have led me to question whether collaborative pedagogy is always possible or desirable in these contexts. In particular I am aware that, because of the behaviour of the group, or difficulties in communication, artist educators also adopt a didactic role at times, transmitting knowledge and becoming more authoritarian.

I see variety within the artist educators' role and have become less convinced that understanding these practitioners exclusively as co-learners is entirely adequate. Instead I prefer a more intricate construction that embraces alternative functions, such as researcher, role model and didact. Hence the desire to interrogate the 'co-learner' model, alongside other pedagogic frameworks has informed this thesis. Also important, if it is possible to be provoked by a single comment, is the following quotation from Sir Nicholas Serota:

> In our opinion, one of the major faults of conventional museum education in the past has been its heavy reliance on art historians, rather than artists as mediators of the work. Art historians create an order for art, a neat sequence of progress from one movement to another, but most artists don't make art to advance art history - that's evolutionary old hat, a modernist cliché. They make art to communicate. We've found that the best person to talk about art in the gallery is an artist who is interested in the art on show and has some sympathy for it (Serota quoted in Graham-Dixon, 1989).

Although his description of how and why art historians work with art appears somewhat narrow and dated now, by highlighting what artists do (they make art to communicate) and how that translates into their work in galleries, Serota makes a useful connection between artistic practice and pedagogy. Equally his unspecific use of terms such as 'the best person to talk about art' and 'has some sympathy for it' prompted me to question whether artists are the best people to talk about art, what the talking about art entails and what is the nature of artists' sympathy with works on show?

The construction of the artist as co-learner and the quotation above provide a basis against which I examine further issues. Serota's comment draws attention to different people's expertise, whilst this and the co-learner model highlight questions of epistemological authority. Thus, although originating from my own experiences, my research interests have broadened. Overall my concern is to interrogate artists' expertise; how that informs their education activities within the gallery and whether the institutional context also shapes this form of pedagogic engagement.

My earliest attempts to define the focus of the research led to the development of five research questions (see Appendix Two). Since then the questions have been simplified and reduced to three:

1. How do selected artist educators construct themselves as 'artists', specifically in terms of the skills, knowledge and experience they perceive they possess?
2. How do these selected artist educators perceive they function as educators within a particular gallery's community education programme?
3. What function does the particular gallery play in shaping these pedagogic activities?

This rationalisation of the research questions resulted in part from my desire to focus on the details of the practices under investigation in depth, rather than attempt a more broad-ranging, but superficial, exploration of a wider range of related issues. The rationale for taking this decision is outlined in chapter three.

1.4 The structure of the research

My research is designed as a series of tiered case studies. The primary focus is five artist educators, each of whom constitutes their own case study. These artist educators' perceptions are examined in the context of the 'Art into Life' (AiL) strand of the community education programme. This activity can be seen as a defined case study (with a specific rationale and *modus operandi*) within the constituency of the gallery's education programme as a whole. These case studies are further contextualised within the institutional confines of Tate Modern, London which has been differentiated from other contemporary art galleries for the purposes of this research. The artists' constructions of themselves and how this informs their relationships with participants and art objects is the starting point for this investigation. However, how the gallery's particular environment and philosophy (which in turn is shaped by broader policy, socio-cultural and theoretical issues) informs their perceptions and activities is also important. Because of this, considering the research questions through the framework of the tiered case studies appears the most appropriate approach to take.

The focus on forms of engagement between artist educators and learners can be seen as an examination of the process or practice of gallery education, rather than the effects of that process. The concept of process and, in particular the development of meaning over time, is central to this thesis and my reasons for concentrating on it are several. First, I am aware of a lack of research examining the nature of ongoing gallery education practice. Second, my experience as an artist educator has led me to believe that pedagogy in the gallery is process-led, rather than outcomes driven. This has fuelled my interest in how practice in the gallery develops, as well as why and for what purposes. Therefore, a research design that did not recognise process seemed inappropriate. Finally, identifying connections between three ways of making meaning (art practice, learning and teaching in the gallery and research) has provided insights into my first two research questions. Areas of convergence and divergence in these different activities have emerged

through a consideration of the respective processes, which a narrower focus on the outcomes of each would not, I believe, have permitted.

Therefore, although the outcomes of any process cannot be ignored altogether, the emphasis here is on analysing an artistic process and pedagogic practice in the gallery in order to understand how and why artists work with learners and artworks in specific ways. It is my intention that this investigation will assist and inform subsequent research on the outcomes of this pedagogic process, but for reasons outlined in chapter three, I do not concentrate on impacts here.

The concept of 'artistic practice' is also important. By understanding art making as a practice, I position it as an activity undertaken by practitioners and foreground what Harris describes as 'its intrinsic material character as a work-process and product' (*Ibid*, 2006: 250). In so doing I wish to distance it from conceptualisations of art making based on notions of wholly individualistic creativity and self-expression (although this alternative construction is addressed in chapter three). Practice is constructed in a broad sense as what artists do (they have an art practice in a similar way a teacher has a teaching practice); it chimes with Griselda Pollock's understanding of art 'presented as a productive practice, creative not in the old bourgeois sense of the creative genius' (Pollock interviewed in Raney, 2003: 132). In this way art practice extends beyond physical making activities; it includes the conceptual aspects of creating artworks. The understanding of art making as a productive practice thus allows for consideration of practitioners' knowledge and skills and how these attributes determine what and how they make; these issues are addressed in chapter four.

My focus is one area within the overall field of gallery education, which shall be denoted forthwith by the term 'contemporary gallery education'. The sector's activities are diverse and range from ongoing programmes in national institutions to one-off projects in small scale, temporary spaces. Likewise gallery educators work with historic collections through to contemporary installations. Although formal education

in museums and galleries has existed for over a hundred years, the specific practice under investigation in this thesis traces its lineage to the late 1960s. I am examining a strand of artistic pedagogy informed by artists' and curators' critiques of the social and cultural conditions of that period and the position held by art and galleries in upholding those conditions (Harding, 1998). It takes place most noticeably (but not exclusively) in modern and contemporary art galleries in the UK, the USA and overseas.

My research concentrates on education activities connected to modern and contemporary art. In the context of cultural production the terms 'modern' and 'contemporary' are complicated and fluid. In this thesis 'modern art' is understood to encompass works created during the 'modern period', or under 'modernism' which coincides with the development of western industrial society from the mid nineteenth century onwards (Bullock & Trombley, 1999, Harris, 2006). However, 'modernism' is a contentious term (Harrison & Wood, 1993). In visual art it is associated with concepts relating to art in society; the role of the artist, the position occupied by the art object, the relationship between viewer and art object and between theory and practice. Art created during the modern period is thus characterised by a questioning of traditional forms and techniques and a criticality regarding its function (*Ibid*, 1993).

More narrowly 'Modernism' (with a capital 'M') is allied with formalism and the twentieth century art critic Clement Greenberg's ideas concerning the specificity of the medium of art and painting in particular (Greenberg, 1961). Formalist ideas advanced by Greenberg, and earlier art historians including Clive Bell and Roger Fry, prioritise art's autonomy and the importance of aesthetic quality over any social or political concerns (*Op cit*, 1993). These constructions of modernism inform how artists are conceptualised in this thesis and how gallery education practice has evolved.

Whereas a multitude of differing understandings of 'modern' are easily accessed, precise definitions of the term 'contemporary' art are harder to find. For example,

Tate Modern's website describes the collection as 'modern and contemporary', yet the online glossary includes 'modern' but omits 'contemporary' (www.tate.org.uk/collections/glossary). Within art education practice 'contemporary' has been associated with art and artists of the present (Cahan & Kocur, 1996), or with practice that is especially current or 'difficult' (Dawe Lane, 1995). Harris (2006) recognises the confusing use of 'contemporary' when applied to art and art institutions. He identifies that since the 1970s 'contemporary' has become associated with art made 'in the present' (*Ibid*, 2006: 67), and although it implies a contrast with a past 'modern' period, the term can be used in connection with work 'both now *and* modern' (*Ibid*, 2006: 67 (writer's emphasis)). Each of these perspectives informs this thesis. Contemporary art is therefore understood here to involve work made in the present time and which can prove especially challenging to viewers.

My thesis recognises the complexity, subtlety and provisional nature of the activities under investigation. Contemporary gallery education is a relatively new profession and is in the process of developing and formalising a comprehensive body of theory and professional recognition that is identifiably its own (Charman, 2006). Equally the practice can be seen to foreground experimentation and the importation or 'borrowing' of ideas and ways of working from other areas of expertise. The eclectic character of contemporary gallery education is reflected in this thesis. The research is informed by different disciplines including art history, artistic practice and pedagogy. It is also located within broad art historical, socio-cultural and policy discourses concerning the function of the artist, the gallery and art object, and the potential for each of these to be educational.

The chapter continues with an examination of particular pedagogic models and an analysis of issues evident within research in museum and gallery education practice more broadly. The need to differentiate learning and teaching practices in the contemporary gallery from museum education is advanced and the argument for research focused on the artist educator articulated.

1.5 Changing perceptions of learning and teaching in the gallery

A primary function of contemporary gallery education is to enable learners to engage with original works of art and with art practice (as defined above). The artist-led pedagogy under investigation here seeks to facilitate this engagement by establishing a balance between teaching interpretive skills and subject knowledge and nurturing and valuing learners' knowledge and experience. It is important, therefore, to have a clear understanding of what is meant by 'teaching' and 'learning'.

In recent years there has been a move away from understanding teaching as the transmission of knowledge by teacher to students. Instead, learners are seen as active constructors of meaning and the teacher (or educator) takes a more facilitative stance, engaging students in the processes of learning, sparking their curiosity, improving the quality of their thinking and increasing their disposition to learn (Watkins, 2003). In keeping with this, the notion of 'pedagogy' adopted here is not only about the science or art of teaching, but refers to 'any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another' (Watkins & Mortimore, 1999:3). Learning as understood in this thesis also reflects a perception of learners as makers of meaning. Abbott's definition usefully summarises some key elements, which have implications for practice in galleries:

> Learning.... that reflective activity which enables the learner to draw upon previous experience to understand and evaluate the present, so as to shape future action and formulate new knowledge (Abbott quoted in Watkins *et al*, 1996)

This definition emphasises learners' active role and highlights learning as an ongoing process. It can therefore be differentiated from alternative views which identify learning as a passive process of knowledge acquisition (Watkins *et al*, 1996).

These differing perceptions of learning and teaching (both in the gallery and beyond) have shaped pedagogy in cultural spaces and in turn influenced the research agenda
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for museum and gallery education. In particular greater recognition of learners' active meaning making processes has encouraged research into visitors' experiences. I move now to consider four conceptions of learning (reception, construction, co-construction and critical pedagogy) in more detail, interrogating how each is presented within gallery education literature. This analysis contextualises the interrogation of the artist educators' perceptions of gallery education practice in chapters seven and eight. The four models examined are useful, as they describe a spectrum of approaches and give insights into gallery pedagogy.

1.5.1 The reception model of learning

In the 'reception' learning model (which has also been referred to as the 'transmission' model (Hein, 1998)) facts, ideas and experiences are objective and independent of the learner and are assimilated passively by them. Learners are given knowledge, skills and values by the expert teacher. In the gallery context, authority, knowledge and expertise are understood to reside wholly within the institution and are transmitted through didactic displays and authoritative lectures or texts.

Although there has been a move away from understanding learning in terms of the reception model (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999), some writers still recognise aspects of it in gallery practice. Adams *et al* maintain that a 'Behaviourist-Positivist' (*Ibid*, 2003: 17) learning model remains in art museums, wherein learners are assumed to know nothing on arrival, but leave 'knowing' a set of facts determined by the gallery. Likewise Hooper-Greenhill's (1993) historic analysis of museum practices acknowledges the division between the experts in the gallery and the uninformed public that exists in the modern museum. However, these more generalised observations also reflect the fact that neither text examines teaching practices in galleries.

Although it is impossible to identify whether Adams *et al* and Hooper-Greenhill's claims are accurate without attending to the individual institutions' education policies, philosophies and practice, these assertions illustrate a need 'for galleries to articulate the principles and values that underpin their work' (Jackson, 2000b: 5). This is despite the fact that, as argued in this thesis, pedagogy in the gallery tends to resist easy generic classification. Nonetheless, acknowledging the place of more instruction-based modes is essential when constructing a picture of how artist educators work with learners.

Recognising that an assumption of the museum's authority underpins certain museum and gallery focused research is also important. This is evidenced most noticeably in early visitor studies, which sought to identify how audiences responded to the institutions' message, or absorbed information the gallery gave them (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999). The cultural institution is fixed at the centre and learners are evaluated according to how they respond to it (Anderson, 1999). Criticisms of this research model have arisen partly from the overall drive to democratise galleries (Worts, 1995); shifting research away from prioritising museums' agendas to addressing the concerns and perceptions of learners (*Op cit*, 1999).

At the same time increasing recognition of the way learners construct meaning in the gallery has highlighted limits to predominantly quantitative research focused on 'the observation of bodies' (*Op cit*, 1999: 11), since these methods fail to account for why individuals might behave in certain ways. Increasingly research addresses visitors' individual meaning making strategies. Ethnographic approaches examining people's interpretive processes and learning experiences have more typically been adopted (Hein, 1998). Black & Hein's (2003) study of a guided field trip to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston is one such example. Here a variety of data collecting techniques were employed, including observation, extended written assignments and interviews to explore how a diverse group of students responded to the gallery. The research concludes that personal meaning making strategies, informed by individuals' prior knowledge and experience, are significant in determining the level of student

engagement. Black & Hein's study focused on a guided visit however the University of Leicester's study of visitors' informal learning strategies (www.le.ac.uk/museumstudies/rcmg/rcmg-research.html) also concludes that learners' existing knowledge shapes their museum experience.

1.5.2 The construction model of learning

Black & Hein's and the University of Leicester's research chimes with the 'construction' model (Watkins, 2003). Here learners continually construct knowledge by building on what they already know, whilst reorganising their understanding in relation to their ongoing experiences; learning involves individual sense-making. This model is widely accepted within museum and gallery education practice (Xanthoudaki *et al*, 2003). According to Hein (1998) individual encounters with objects and the active engagement of the learner determines learning. Falk & Dierking (2000) also connect learners' personal contexts with the socio - cultural and physical context in which learning occurs. The construction model has shaped understandings of visitors' encounters with cultural spaces, but also (as evident in the studies noted above) informed research into formal and informal learning in galleries.

Xanthoudaki's (1997) study of two art galleries and one museum demonstrates how Falk & Dierking's (2000) contextual model of learning can be used to examine what factors influence learning in cultural institutions. Xanthoudaki's research is returned to in relation to the artist educators' perceptions in chapter seven. However, two issues are relevant here. First, Xanthoudaki concludes that education programmes that build on young people's participation and individual interpretations are more likely to encourage learning than ones concerned with the search for right answers. She also notes that trained gallery education staff enabled 'flexible, open-ended and interactive processes in front of works of art' (*Ibid*, 1997: 30) and stimulated engagement. Absence of these staff in the museum context, the study concludes lessened interactive learning processes.

My reasons for detailing these issues are threefold. Participation, the valuing of individual voice and engagement are core principles of contemporary gallery education practice and Xanthoudaki's identification that these activities support learning is valuable. Second, her research identifies educators' effectiveness in promoting interactive learning, although in common with other research in this field, Xanthoudaki does not elucidate how and why educators operate. This again is significant, not least because in the construction learning model teachers are not seen to impart information, so much as provide appropriate ways for learners to access culture and make meaning (Bruner, 1990). Educators enable or facilitate, guiding and supporting learners rather than instructing them, although their relationship is still one of 'expert to novice' (Carnell & Lodge, 2002:13). Finally, Xanthoudaki differentiates between pedagogy in museums and galleries. Prior to considering these differences, I now examine the 'co-construction' model (Watkins, 2003).

1.5.3 The co-construction model of learning

Co-construction recognises that knowledge is socially constructed and learning is identified as active, collaborative and social. This opposes the reception model's emphasis on more passive knowledge assimilation by individuals. In the co-construction model learning develops from individuals' existing experience and knowledge (as in the construction model), is driven by learners' intentions and choices, but is accomplished through building and sharing knowledge and experiences with others. Hence the group or 'learning community' (Carnell & Lodge, 2002) is the most effective scenario for facilitating change and enriching learning. This use of the term 'community' emphasises knowledge generation and development in all constituents; all members learn together (Watkins, 2005). Hence here the teacher functions less as expert and more as co-learner, sharing and re-ordering their knowledge in collaboration with learners.

As noted above, the construction of artists as co-learners within co-constructive modes of learning is found in texts addressing pedagogy in cultural spaces, particularly contemporary art galleries. Carnell & Meecham (2001) place importance on collaborative learning in relation to young people's development of visual literacy in the contemporary art gallery. Likewise Fuirer (2005) recognises that 'interaction with others' voices and constructing multiple interpretations is an inherent characteristic of gallery based learning (*Ibid*, 2005: 10). These and other studies (Addison & Burgess, 2006, Aldred & O'Brian, 2006, Carnell *et al*, 2004, Pringle, 2002b) also stress the centrality of dialogue in the learning process.

As becomes evident in later chapters of this thesis, dialogue plays an important role in the pedagogic process under examination, and also within the research process. Dialogue constitutes a specific form of interaction which is central to meaning making activities between individuals. More than conversation, dialogue is dynamic and generative and promotes critical investigation, reflection, analysis and the reorganisation of knowledge (Anderson, 1999b, Carnell & Lodge, 2002). Dialogue also allows for risk taking and the sharing and questioning of ideas. Within an ideal dialogic exchange space is given to all voices and without it, co-constructive learning is not possible.

In most learning situations all three models of learning are likely to be present (Watkins, 2003) and the boundaries between transmissive and constructive pedagogy, for example, are not fixed. However, the presence of the co-construction model within specific literature on gallery education suggests it has particular significance to the practice under scrutiny here. Nonetheless, for the reasons outlined above and despite my own previous employment of the co-construction model (Pringle, 2002b) this thesis does not necessarily embrace co-construction unreservedly. I see value in questioning this form of 'collaborative' learning in the gallery.

1.5.4. Critical pedagogy

A focus on dialogue and a more collaborative role for the teacher is also found in models of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy covers a range of approaches but all share the following themes: it emphasises student experience and voice, has as its objectives self and social empowerment, addresses the inherent contradiction between teacher authority and emancipation and advocates democratic classroom practices with an emphasis on dialogue (Gore, 1993). Therefore unlike co-constructive models, critical pedagogy identifies personal and political empowerment and social development specifically as desired outcomes of the learning process.

Given that policy makers perceive contemporary gallery education to have a transformative social and educational agenda, critical pedagogy provides an additional framework to the three models identified above through which to usefully consider the conditions for, and outcomes of this form of learning. Addison and Burgess' (2006) research, for example, drew on critical pedagogic models to examine how gallery education enables learners 'to question both assumptions about their habituated ways of learning and the institutional systems that label them as learners' (*Ibid*, 2006: 46). Although this thesis does not examine learners' perceptions, interrogating how certain artist educators' practice functions within policy discourses is part of my third research question. This analysis is therefore informed by a critical framework.

1.5 Further trends in gallery and museum education research

Prioritising the learner's experience within museum and gallery research has been attributed above to changes in our understanding of how and why people learn. At the same time other factors have encouraged galleries to become more aware of their audiences' needs and interests. Most notably, there has been political pressure on cultural institutions to become more accessible and accountable (DCMS, 2000), which has prompted the gathering of information on who visits and why. Hence from

the mid 1980s audience research addressing visitors' experiences emerged as a dominant concern within the museum and gallery field.

This drive toward greater accessibility is attributable to financial pressure partly, as reductions in government funding (particularly in the 1980's) forced cultural institutions to adopt a business model (Cuno, 2004). Nowadays museums and galleries are expected to justify their requirements for public funding and function within the context of the leisure industry. Positioned as cultural enterprises, galleries play a significant part in a local area's economic and social regeneration (Tate Modern in Southwark, London and Baltic gallery in Newcastle being examples of this phenomenon) and contribute on an ongoing basis to the cultural tourism industry. Galleries now function as part tourist attraction, part entertainment centre, as well as repositories of art and must 'keep a balance between being a place of learning and knowledge and a place of enjoyment' (MacGregor, 2004: 30). Cultural institutions' need to increase audience numbers and provide enjoyable experiences has prompted research into visitor satisfaction and 'visit quality' (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999).

Simultaneously, politically driven debates concerning widening cultural participation have impacted on how gallery education is researched. Shortly after gaining power in 1997, the present Labour government (1997 - 2008) began to prioritise access and learning in relation to their arts policies. This commitment was outlined in a series of policy documents, which also spell out the contribution that cultural centres can make to creativity, lifelong learning and combating social exclusion (PAT10, 1999, NACCCE, 1999, DCMS, 2001). Whilst more recent cultural policy has centred on the 2012 Olympics, the earlier government interest has translated into targeted schemes specifically supporting gallery and museum education work.

The DCMS' 'Strategic Commissioning for Museum and Gallery Education', for example, ran from 2004-2006 and aimed to strengthen capacity in museums and galleries. Its four strands included 'enquire', a national research programme for gallery education intended to build sector capacity (Taylor, 2006). The other strands

addressed support for national museums and galleries, assistance for regional museums and a secondment programme for teachers and museum/gallery educators (*Ibid*, 2006). These initiatives focused attention and resources on cultural organisations' education and access initiatives. This in turn affected research agendas, with the assessment of cultural and educational outcomes (It is noticeable that terms such as 'impacts', 'outputs', 'measurement' and 'accountability' dominate policy discourse) assuming particular importance.

Evidence for this prioritisation of education and access within the museum sector is found in the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council's (MLA) drive to embed learning at the centre of museum policy throughout England. Founded in 2000, the MLA is the government's strategic agency for museums, libraries and archives. In that same year the MLA launched the *Inspiring Learning for All Framework*, which is designed to 'improve services in museums, libraries and archives' and 'measure the impact of these on people's learning' (www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk). Central to the framework is the Measure Learning Toolkit which outlines methods (including the Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs) and more recently the Generic Social Outcomes (GSOs)) to research and evaluate visitors learning from museum experiences. The GLOs were developed and piloted through the Learning Impact Research Project (LIRP) in 2003 and are actively being promoted through the museum sector by the MLA as a means of measuring and accounting for learning in museums (www.mla.gov.uk).

The terminology employed here – 'measuring', 'accounting', 'impact', 'outcome' and 'toolkit' indicates the dominant perspective for this type of essentially evaluative exercise. The central concern within government is determining what learners have acquired from a museum visit, rather than how or why. The GLOs developed from a constructivist and socio-cultural perspective that sees learning as a complex and ongoing process involving the construction of individual and collective meaning. However, the model is essentially passive. It looks at what skills, knowledge and

experiences learners have acquired, rather than exploring the active processes they engage in.

The GLO model has been employed within research into contemporary gallery education practice with mixed results. Johnson (2006) found the GLO framework useful for analyzing impacts on participants of a particular education initiative co-ordinated by the Whitechapel Gallery. The Whitechapel staff used the framework to codify and measure students' comments about their learning, using the five identified learning outcomes: 'knowledge and understanding', 'skills', 'attitudes and values', 'enjoyment and inspiration' and 'activity, behaviour and progression'. Ostensibly the research focus was learner centred, yet the Whitechapel chose the GLOs partly to demonstrate how the gallery was meeting specific outcomes (*Ibid*, 2006). This in turn assisted advocacy and fundraising. In this way the Whitechapel's research bears comparison with earlier visitor studies that explored how audiences 'responded' to the institution's message.

In contrast, Aldred & O'Brian (2006) note that research conducted as part of the 'enquire' programme, indicates that the GLOs are sufficiently generic to accommodate most learning scenarios, but this is 'at the expense of resonance and apparent 'match' with the aims of the gallery sector' (*Ibid*, 2006: 105). In particular artists, gallery educators and teachers considered three key elements were missing from the GLO's categorization of learning. These were: the importance of risk taking, experimentation and mistake-making as modes of learning, the importance of individual thought as a trigger for learning and the understanding of learning as an act of self-determination. As well as alluding to the variety and specificity of learning in the gallery, these three issues suggest that an exclusive focus on outcomes is insufficient. Instead research into gallery education practice needs to take account of the process and the context in which learning takes place.

1.6 Differentiating between gallery and museum education research and focusing on artist educators

Reservations toward the GLOs articulated by the gallery education research partners above indicate that disparities may exist between education practices conducted within museums and galleries. Gallery education undoubtedly shares some of the principles and pedagogic and social theories that inform education in museums, but differences are present in the approaches taken by gallery educators, the learning experiences and expected outcomes of education activities. However, this thesis does not intend to polarise galleries and museums, but rather to identify the specific practice within galleries to gain greater understanding. Equally there is insufficient space here to examine details of these different practices. More important is identifying the implications for research into the sector and this thesis in particular.

Significantly, much research on museum and gallery education has been conducted within multidisciplinary museums. In these institutions the tradition of employing specialist freelance staff to work directly with visitors interpreting collections is not as long established or widespread as in UK art galleries (particularly contemporary ones). Xanthoudaki's (1997) research mentioned above noted this difference. Likewise Stanley & Galloway's (2004) comparative research into the character and outcomes of gallery and education projects, concluded that gallery education tends to involve one-off, tailor-made projects involving artists as educators, as opposed to more standard museum-based programmes facilitated by a museum educator. In both these texts, artists' approaches are seen to have beneficial impacts on learners, yet little indication is given as to why.

A lack of analysis regarding the ways artists' pedagogic practice functions is also evident amongst broader discourses on creativity and participation in the cultural sphere. The key roles played by artists and other creative individuals in facilitating learning is recognised, but rarely examined in detail. Statements such as the

following, made in a survey of artists in schools undertaken by The Office for Standards in Education in England (Ofsted) are characteristic of these;

> There is a growing body of evidence and testimony to indicate that the work of artists in schools and colleges enhances the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom and makes a significant contribution to the quality of school life (Oddie & Allen, 1998:18)

More recent research, whilst concurring that artists do play a pivotal role, acknowledges that 'research evidence' to support Oddie & Allen's broad reaching claim is 'highly elusive' (Harland *et al*, 2005: 209). Harland *et al* conclude that one of the most effective characteristics within arts-education interventions is what they describe as 'artists' pedagogy'. The writers do not give a precise definition of artists' pedagogy, but indicate it embraces several different elements:

> The quality of explanation and the nature of feedback; the use of resources; the provision of opportunities for creativity; the extent to which pupils were allowed ownership of activities and the artist's flexibility to pupil needs were all seen as important aspects of the individual artist's approach to teaching (Ibid, 2005: 130).

In doing so the writers begin to outline what artists do and how they operate when working with learners, but do not address why artists might work in this way, or what motivates these practitioners. Going on to acknowledge that information about individual and organizational capabilities in this respect is limited at present, they highlight the need for greater research into arts-education interventions from artists' perspectives.

This view is shared by Sekules (2003) who, in a text examining the artist as teacher from her viewpoint as a gallery educator, argues for a surer understanding of the artist's role regarding teaching and learning in the gallery. Acknowledgements such as these have, in part, prompted my thesis. Equally, previous research I conducted into artists' pedagogic roles in varied sites for learning and their forms of engagement with learners found evidence of a multi-layered, yet relatively under-researched practice (Pringle, 2002b). A central concern of this thesis is an examination of what artists teach and how they encounter learners and artworks, in order to construct a

coherent picture of what 'artists' pedagogy' amounts to. For at present, although texts may refer to the outcomes of this practice, they rarely, if ever, analyse it in detail.

1.7 Summary and conclusion

Locating my thesis within the context of contemporary gallery education practice, theory and research has been this chapter's purpose. The rationale for my investigation, including the three research questions, has been outlined. Aspects of the thesis, such as the focus on pedagogic process rather than outcomes, and the delimitation of 'contemporary gallery education' within the overall field, have been described. Space has been given to four pedagogic models (reception, construction, co-construction and critical pedagogy) that inform gallery education practice. I have examined previous gallery and museum education research, noted differences between the two and highlighted the current lack of research tackling how and why artist educators work.

This chapter outlines specific pedagogic and policy discourses within which gallery education functions and identifies the need for research on artist educators' practice. The following chapter expands on this by examining further relevant concepts drawn from art history and cultural theory. In so doing, these two chapters together address the theoretical framework in which artist educators and contemporary gallery education are located.

2. The development of gallery education: theory into practice

2.1 Introduction

Contemporary gallery education functions within varied theoretical frameworks. The pedagogic models outlined in the previous chapter inform teaching and learning in the gallery, but wider discourses also affect how education is perceived by those within and beyond cultural institutions. In particular, prevailing debates on the relationship between the art gallery, the art within it and society inform gallery operations. Since the opening of the first public art gallery in Great Britain (The Dulwich Picture Gallery) in 1814, art galleries' role as providers of aesthetic, educational or entertaining experiences for visitors has been contested. Nowadays galleries are encouraged, if not expected, by policy makers to prioritise learning, but this has not always been the case. One issue this thesis examines is how artist educators operate within current tensions around galleries' responsibilities to their collections and audiences. An examination of the theoretical context underpinning the development of the practice helps clarify why such tensions exist.

Historically gallery education is rooted in the nineteenth century belief in art and culture's ability to improve and civilise society (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, McClellan, 2003). Major institutions including the National Gallery (established in 1824) and Tate Gallery (established in 1897) had broad educational agendas when they were opened, whilst other organisations, including the Whitechapel Gallery in London (established in 1901), were specifically tasked with bringing culture to the uneducated masses (Graham-Dixon, 1989). In this formulation, galleries were, in themselves, understood to be educational establishments whose function was to enable individuals to educate, and thereby improve themselves. Education was not, however, understood in terms of gaining knowledge. Instead it was the acquisition of 'taste' and increased ability to perceive beauty that were seen as legitimate aspirations for those of the middle class engaging with art at that time. Alongside this

function, art was also a force for moral improvement for the feckless. For instance, on visiting the National Gallery in London in 1824, William Hazlitt wrote:

> It is a cure (for the time at least) for low-thoughted cares and uneasy passions.... The contemplation of truth and beauty is the proper object for which we were created, which calls forth the most intense desires of the soul, and of which it never tires (Hazlitt, quoted in Duncan, 1995: 15)

This understanding of galleries as primarily educational establishments was superseded by the 1920s. Collecting emerged as galleries' foremost responsibility, taking priority over institutions' requirement to make objects accessible or understandable to visitors (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, McClellan, 2003). Education became identified with specialist research or with schools and colleges and until the 1970s few galleries contained specialist education departments (Luckett, 1985).

2.2 Examining the relationship between viewer and artwork

2.2.1 A critique of modernism, formalism and aesthetic appreciation

More inward-looking shifts in museum and gallery activity coincided with the development of so called 'modernist' ideas in culture at large. As identified previously, 'modernism' is contested, yet it continues to shape how the viewer's relationship to art is constructed (Harrison & Wood, 1993). Modernist ideas have come under sustained criticism since the late 1960s and alternative concepts, which reposition the viewer and undermine art's autonomous status, have been advanced. Consideration of these contrasting perspectives illuminates their influence on contemporary gallery education.

Whilst emphasising visual art's formal qualities, modernism also constructs viewing art as an unique 'aesthetic experience' (Bell, 1914, Fry, 1909) that is 'disinterested', but capable of transforming the spectator. Building on the eighteenth century Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant's ideas (1790), under modernism the aesthetic experience is also judged to be essentially visceral and embodied rather

than intellectual. This view implies that viewers need neither specialist knowledge nor even familiarity with art in order to identify quality (or what Bell termed 'significant form' (*Ibid*, 1914: 113)) in art and to be moved by it. As such, appreciation of art is projected as an innate gift, a 'sensibility', rather than an acquired ability. Those who do not possess this gift are lacking; 'they are deaf men at a concert. They know that they are in the presence of something great, but they lack the power of apprehending it' (*Ibid*, 1914: 115).

Education in this scenario is irrelevant, since the implication is that no amount of teaching would enable those without the necessary inherent sensitivity to attain 'aesthetic ecstasy' (*Ibid*, 1914: 116). Instead galleries' responsibilities extend to presenting work, uncluttered by any interpretive material, to allow art to speak for itself and viewers to engage with it on a non-cognitive level.

More recently, this positioning of art as accessible only to those with sufficient taste and 'sensitivity' has been critiqued for naturalizing a process that can be identified as ideological (Bourdieu, 1979). In his study of French museums in the 1960s, Bourdieu identifies that comprehending works of art requires education and 'cultural capital', which is a form of class distinction more than an inherent gift (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1997). Cultural capital represents an individual's accumulated knowledge of, and familiarity with, cultural practices and is acquired through the development of certain skills, attitudes and abilities and, above all, education. It is a person's degree of cultural capital that determines the extent to which they can make meaning from art. This is because, for all their physical accessibility, art objects remain out of reach of the unfamiliar viewer owing to the theoretical discourse that surrounds them.

It is not only in the intellectual sphere where those lacking in cultural capital may feel uncomfortable. Also recognised, in Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' (*Op cit*, 1979), is people's acquisition (through education and socialization) of dispositions which enable them to respond in certain ways to given social situations. Habitus embraces all aspects of culture located in the practice of individuals; it represents the accepted

habits of a specific group (Robbins, 2000). Thus in the gallery context, the habitus of the dominant class finds form in the idea that 'taste' is an inherent gift, for example. Silence is seen as the appropriate state for appreciating work and 'bareness and lack of ornamentation encourage the asceticism which leads to the beatific vision' (*Op cit*, 1997: 2).

The separation of 'art' from society is allied to the development of the avant-garde and its relationship to how the bourgeoisie define themselves (*Op cit*, 1979). In this way, according to the theory, 'distinction' is maintained when actual capital is no longer a social signifier. Through maintaining distinction the bourgeoisie elevate certain artworks thereby rendering them conceptually, if not physically, inaccessible to the lower classes. The latter, deficient in the necessary cultural capital, and unfamiliar with the habitus of the gallery visit, are unable to respond appropriately. Through employing this strategy the middle classes retain their position of power within the overall cultural 'field' (*Op cit*, 1979) in relation to those nominally below them. In this way Bourdieu identifies how cultural capital functions to perpetuate social differences by legitimizing certain practices as naturally the product of one class, when in reality those practices are outcomes of privileged experience and education.

The concept of art appreciation and Bourdieu's critique of it have significant implications for any research concerned with the study of art and issues of cultural access. In particular the concept that understanding art, and hence art itself, is rightfully only available to a minority of the populace who are sensitive enough to appreciate it remains unresolved. Echoes of this continue to surface in the current debate around cultural inclusion. An example is given by one publication that addresses the relationship between cultural practitioners and policy makers (Wallinger & Warnock, 2000). The title; '*Art for all? <u>Their</u> Policies and <u>our</u> Culture*' (my emphasis) arguably suggests that culture is the possession of a certain group of people and needs to remain that way.

Bourdieu's ideas have been criticised for reducing the symbolic and cultural complexity of the gallery wholly to political or sociological interests (Duncan, 1995). Nonetheless, his concepts are relevant for this thesis as they provide a starting point for examining cultural engagement and ownership. Echoing Bourdieu's concepts, Allen & Clive (1995) identify that enlightened gallery practitioners in the late 1970s (particularly those showing contemporary art) recognised the value of enabling audiences to access the theoretical and historical context for the works, or risk alienating the non-professional art audience.

This growing awareness was a response to 'populist' ideas (and civil unrest following the 1968 Paris riots) and contributed to the development of more accessible gallery policies at that time. These included the notions that anyone can make art, selectivity is exclusive and wrong, aesthetics is merely middle-class taste reinforced by the academy, and art held by or exhibited in galleries reflects and upholds the experiences of middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied white males (*Ibid*, 1995). These ideas are examined further below, but it is worth noting here that Allen and Clive, both gallery educators, connect theories challenging galleries' position of exclusivity with the development of gallery education at this time.

2.2.2 Examining the shift from looking at the object to reading the text

In tandem with the re-appraisal of formalism and the aesthetic appreciation model came the theoretical shift from seeing meaning in an artwork, not as an unchanging entity implanted by the artist, but as emerging through active interchange between artwork and viewer. Certain late nineteenth and early twentieth century writers saw the artist creating objects that express feelings or emotions (Fry, 1909). At the same time artists including Maurice Denis were asserting that art represented the subjective transformation of nature and that imagination was 'the queen of the faculties' (*Ibid*, 1909: 50). These writers considered that an artwork's meaning is determined by the artist, whose intentions are made visible in the form of the object and subsequently communicated to or evoked unmediated in the 'sensitive' viewer. In this respect the

artist is privileged as the unquestioned and uniquely inspired author of a work, the meaning of which remains fixed and specific. The viewer's responsibility is to be sufficiently discerning to receive that meaning.

Criticisms of this position have, in part, centered on the impossibility of re-constructing artistic intention (Harrison, 1984) and the need to acknowledge social and cultural factors that influence how art is created and perceived (Harris, 2002). Such critiques challenge traditional modes of presenting and interpreting work in the gallery, with alternative voices and personal responses increasingly being given space, most notably through the use of new technology. Arguably, however, it is artists' and curators' voices which continue to dominate interpretations of art and the extent to which artist educators in the gallery privilege artistic intention when developing meaning in relation to a work of art is an emerging theme in this thesis.

Alternatively culture has been positioned as a set of language-like systems of meaning, rather than a collection of works created by a succession of uniquely inspired geniuses. Roland Barthes (1977), the French semiotician argues that visual images function as 'texts' to be 'interpreted' and 'read' in an interactive fashion, rather than passively absorbed by viewers (*Ibid*, 1977). The production of a work's meaning is thereby relocated to a space contingent upon rather than within the art object. The axiomatic qualities of artworks are opened up, since works are no longer perceived to possess one, absolute essentialist truth. Instead active interchange with the viewer provisionally gives work meaning, albeit one that is subject to change. Hence plural interpretations (which are always open to revision) of a single work are deemed valid, each a product of the individual viewer's unique interaction with the object. This plurality does, however, raise the issue of what constitutes a 'valid' reading and who is authorised to sanction alternative interpretations.

The contrasting arguments provide insights into the construction of art's meaning but, as Raney (2003) identifies, at their extremes the models can become unworkable; 'The first approach runs the risk of becoming unresponsive to change, passing off a

particular world view as universal; the second approach can lead to extreme relativism where all distinctions of quality are leveled' (*Ibid,* 2003:7). Nonetheless, the form and function of contemporary gallery education is linked to understandings of where meaning in an artwork is located and how it can be communicated. Moreover, the principle of plural and shifting interpretations underpins gallery education practice at Tate Modern (Charman *et al*, 2006), yet artists are also recognised as the authors of work. Artist educators can be seen in part to negotiate these polarised positions, occupying a crucial, yet convoluted role, when working with learners.

2.3 Positioning the gallery as a cultural institution

As noted above, changes in gallery policy since the 1970s have been equated with shifting theoretical perceptions of the institution. There is increasing awareness of galleries' status as cultural institutions that represent and communicate specific cultural mores. Shifts toward greater accessibility have been ascribed to 'developments in critical theory about knowledge and social movements that seek to include and empower previously marginalized or excluded voices' (Adams *et al*, 2003:16). As a result the perception of the art museum as a 'temple of ideal contemplation' (Moore Tapia & Hazelroth Barrett, 2003: 197) has faced criticism. Issues of cultural identity and representation inform gallery practice, which are both affected by and influence the institution's relationship with its audiences.

Research concerned with critical pedagogic activities taking place within art galleries arguably needs to take account of wider cultural issues presented by the institution, given their effects on galleries' education activities. Gallery education practitioners have acknowledged that contemporary gallery education itself developed, in part, as a response to theoretical critiques of the gallery (Allen & Clive, 1995, Jackson & Meecham, 1999, Harding, 1998). My thesis acknowledges critical frameworks that deconstruct the cultural institution in order to understand how education practices function. The critical stance also permits examination of how contemporary gallery education reinforces or critiques institutional values.

At the same time, this thesis' primary concern is to examine the practice as a lived experience in the gallery. This practice, as understood by selected artist educators has an involved and at times uneasy relationship with the broad-reaching theories outlined below (and, indeed, the theories concerning viewers and artworks articulated above). The delicate interconnection between theory and practice is an ongoing theme throughout this thesis and is re-examined in later chapters. Specifically, although acknowledging their relevance to the practice, I am conscious that theories addressing the institution and practices within it on a meta-level are conceivably too generic when faced with the reality of pedagogy in the gallery.

2.4 Examining the gallery in relation to knowledge, power, display and Representation

Critical positions I am concerned with challenge the view of the gallery as a neutral space separate from society; a 'white cube' (O'Doherty, 1999), whose purpose is to provide a space of 'aesthetic contemplation' (Bell, 1914) for those sensitive and informed enough to appreciate the art within. The 'white cube' ideal has a profound impact on art gallery design, display practices, audience development and expected visitor behaviour within the gallery. Most significant here is the degree to which it supports or negates contemporary gallery education practices generally and community education specifically.

Challenges to the modernist view of the gallery as a transcendent space involve deconstructing its supposed objectivity. Writers (Bennett, 1995, Duncan, 1995) have drawn on concepts developed by Michel Foucault in their analyses of galleries' formulation within 'discourses of power' (Foucault, 1966). Particularly relevant are Foucault's arguments that knowledge is intrinsically linked to power and is formed within the context of practices of power. Knowledge subsequently contributes to the development and refinement of dominant discourses that give meaning to social practices. In this way a particular discourse serves to define and produce certain objects of knowledge in intelligible ways, whilst excluding other forms of knowledge as illegitimate.

Foucault's theories are helpful in understanding the relationship between knowledge and power and its link to expertise; what constitutes 'expert' knowledge and how is expertise manifested in the gallery? In later chapters of this thesis these questions are examined in the context of professional knowledge, but here focus is on the discriminatory nature of aesthetic discourse. What emerges is the direct relationship between historically specific practices as exhibited within museums and various discourses surrounding them. For example, Hooper-Greenhill's (1993) historic analysis of museum practices illuminates the relationship between knowledge and power. Her examination of the 'modern' museum draws a division between private and public spaces. Private space is occupied by the curator, or 'expert', who produces knowledge in the form of exhibitions and supporting materials, such as catalogues and wall texts. This knowledge is revealed in the public space where visitors (who lack expertise) consume appropriately presented products.

Such a hegemonic (Gramsci, 1968) stance, where knowledge is passively absorbed by an 'ignorant' public who unwittingly collude in their own dominated state, can be challenged by including visitors in the interpretive process (Jackson & Meecham, 1999). For example, gallery educators have sought to undermine notions of expertise by inviting visitors to write their own interpretive labels, which are placed alongside curators' comments (Halbreich, 1998). Collaborative curation of exhibitions with those from beyond the gallery is another intervention adopted by museum and gallery professionals keen to engage in more accessible forms of cultural creation and interpretation (Kelly & Gordon, 2002). This thesis interrogates whether artist educators mediate between curators and visitors, moving between private and public spaces, and what skills and knowledge are needed to enable them to do this. Relevant also is whether artist-led pedagogy, which enables participants to negotiate individual meanings, also function as critical tools within the institution.

Aligned with the deconstruction of institutional knowledge and power is a growing awareness that galleries 'represent' and define society and people. Exhibitions are 'a political arena in which definitions of identity and culture are asserted and contested'

(Karp, 1992: 17), since cultural institutions are implicated in classifying people and societies. Foucault argues that the voices of the insane, for example, are not 'legitimate' and are therefore excluded from dominant discourses (Foucault, 1965). So it can be seen that art falling outside the dominant discourses of art practice, history and theory (either because of who it is made by or what it represents) has traditionally been unrecognised by cultural institutions upholding that discourse. In the past feminist art historians challenged women's omission from art history (Pollock, 1988). More recently there have been attempts by disabled curators and artists to highlight the absence of work made by, or positively representing, disabled individuals within cultural institutions (Delin, 2002).

Arguably, despite the advent of so-called 'postmodernism', galleries continue to naturalise meanings and maintain the dominant class' supremacy by exhibiting specific forms of art and excluding others. In other words, cultural institutions support and confirm the existing social and cultural order. Those in power whose beliefs, values and identities are well represented within galleries are further legitimised, whilst those whose cultural forms are excluded, themselves remain so. Duncan (1995), for example, exposes the modern art museum as a gendered space 'normally scripted for male subjects' (*Ibid*, 1995: 114) that privileges the heroic (usually white, western) male artist and the male spectator. In this scenario women and other non-white visitors are at best not addressed, at worst wholly excluded.

However, moves to counter this tendency can themselves be problematic. Poppi (2003) highlights how attempts to exhibit art from Africa within a number of western galleries failed to account for the multiplicity of practice. Instead alternative, but overly simplistic and hence flawed, conceptual categorisations were imposed. Poppi is particularly critical of what he defines as 'post-modern' aesthetic categorisations, seeing these as coming from a western perspective that bears little relation to the original practitioners' intentions. This has implications for contemporary gallery education, since characteristics of 'postmodernism' have informed the development of the practice (Charman *et al*, 2001, Moore Tapia & Hazelroth Barrett, 2003).

'Postmodernism' is as contentious a term as 'modernism'. It has been characterised in the visual arts as the erosion of universalism evidenced in the breakdown between art and life; the collapse of the traditional hierarchy between high and low art and the questioning of concepts such as originality and authenticity (Featherstone, 1991). For gallery practitioners such as Juliet Moore Tapia and Susan Hazelroth Barrett, postmodernism offers a conceptual approach that allows for multiple interpretations, the valuing of learners' perspectives and the de-sanctification of the gallery space (*Ibid*, 2003). But as noted earlier, others within the profession have raised concerns that it can sanction absolute relativism (Raney, 2003) or can itself become an inflexible orthodoxy that does not take account of the specificity of the art making process (Pollock interviewed in Raney, 2003). It is tensions such as these (examined in chapters seven and eight) that education practitioners negotiate through gallery pedagogy.

2.5 The gallery and theories of social improvement

The motivation for creating public museums in the nineteenth century developed from a sense that culture had the capacity to improve the conditions of the general populace (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994). Intrinsic to this is a belief in art's capacity to morally, spiritually and emotionally uplift the individual. This key issue (albeit problematic) stems from the Enlightenment philosopher Emmanuel Kant's (1790) identification that 'great' art (itself the product of genius) is transcendent and can inspire, transform and somehow elevate the viewer. The implication is that the appreciation of beauty and of great art can improve people somehow.

Within nineteenth century galleries these ideas were manifest on two levels. The institution itself, through its displays, was to be instructional and function as an instrument of mass education. Additionally, the museum was to provide a space wherein 'lower classes' could learn from and emulate the morals and behaviour of the middle classes (Bennett, 1995). From the architecture of the gallery to the arrangement of the work inside, the creators' intention were to emphasize the

civilising potential of art (Duncan, 1995). Works hung in chronological order demonstrated the progress of art and society towards a better state, whilst those visiting engaged in an active process of self-improvement. As such, the aim of education in the gallery, as it was understood in the nineteenth century, was the production of 'a new improved working class, one which shared the values of the classes above it' (Borzello, 1995: 6).

Some recent commentators (Buckingham, 2000, Carnell & Meecham, 2001, Harding, 2005) have drawn unfavorable parallels between this civilising discourse and the current Labour government's (1997-2008) cultural agendas in relation to social exclusion. Buckingham and Harding point to tensions between the rhetoric of increased creative opportunities and empowerment for potentially excluded people with a stifling of criticality or the acceptance of dissenting voices. They highlight the risk that the arts are being used as a tool for social control, whereas Carnell & Meecham question whether the arts can bring about improvements where social and educational initiatives have failed. Furthermore, concepts of social exclusion as currently deployed by the government have been criticized for concentrating on marginality yet tending to leave those at the centre unexamined and unchanged (Young, 2002). Hence the 'top-down' model of cultural provision is perpetuated, wherein the gallery is defined as a 'centre for social change' (DCMS, 2000) and others are understood to require changing.

In the context of the gallery, there is a danger therefore that education is cast as a means of inculcating the other into a middle class habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). Pedagogy amounts to no more than enabling individuals to 'make the correct (posh) noises... a kind of etiquette which will allow us not to make fools of ourselves in the appropriate social circumstances' (Harrison, 1984: 10). Galleries thereby function as social and 'political' institutions carrying out ideological functions, reinforcing power structures and transforming visitors into willing acceptors of the status quo (Duncan, 1995). The scope for challenging the institution and dominant discourses is limited.

But is this construction of the gallery and its education activities as tools for social control evident in the practice today? If this were the case gallery education would logically be restricted to providing interpretative material and organising lectures, for example, with a view to transmitting the authoritative voice of the institution. However, strands of gallery pedagogy emerging in the 1970s embraced a critical and reflective element, which continues to inform current practice. Thus for certain professionals in the field, contemporary gallery education functions not only to support the objectives of the gallery in showing art and enabling audiences to understand and enjoy it, but also to allow visitors to question art and the institution and contribute to a collective understanding of works. As Toby Jackson, the first Head of Interpretation and Education at Tate Modern (1999) identifies:

> ...Much of our work is to challenge the calm face of the museum, to make complex, in defiance of the tendency of the museum to simplify the concept behind an exhibition.....to bring into the museum the debates which are being rehearsed outside and to take opportunities to unveil other works of art. So the notion is of education challenging pre-conceptions, enabling plurality to happen within the gallery... (Jackson & Meecham, 1999: 92)

Education in the gallery, as suggested by Jackson, serves a critical purpose and confronts the 'political' rationale identified by Duncan (1995) above. Jackson goes on to state that visitors should be encouraged to contribute to current cultural debates and actively question the institution. In doing so the 'successful' visitor (*Op cit*, 1999: 91) sees that cultural artefacts and institutions that show them are places of value. For Jackson, therefore, gallery education exists to enable visitors to make personal connection with the institution and art itself that is 'meaningful' to them. In other words, meanings that visitors construct are generated from their individual engagement with the work. Formulated this way pedagogic practices in the gallery negotiate between visitors, artworks and the cultural space, rather than transmit institutional messages unchallenged.

Positioning gallery education as negotiating meaningful engagement for learners is central to this thesis. Yet it is important to interrogate further why and for what purpose contemporary gallery education seeks to challenge the institutional *status*

quo and enable visitors to engage with the gallery. How do more critical discourses emerge in the practice itself? Connections have already been made to ideas that challenged the cultural institution's authority. Further explanation can be found in the historic links between gallery education and the form of participatory artistic practice which has been described as 'community arts' (Dickson, 1995).

2.6 Examining connections between gallery education and community arts

'Community arts' is another problematic term. This is partly because it has been used pejoratively in contrast with modes of artistic production which originate from individual artists, take form predominantly through studio-based activities and are distributed through galleries. There is little documentation or analysis of the community arts movement (Morgan, 1995, Harding, 2005) and it is questionable whether community arts, as understood by its adherents during the 1970s and 1980s, is still practiced. This may just be a question of terminology, however, as more recently terms such as 'socially-engaged' (Doherty, 2004), 'dialogic' (Kester, 2004) or 'negotiated' practice (Butler & Reiss, 2007), as well as 'new-genre public art' (Lacy, 1995) in America have become associated with artists' engagement with particular non-artist constituent groups. Nonetheless the term 'community arts' has fallen out of favour. Rather than examining the practice, however, my interest is in how early permutations of community arts informed the development of gallery education. The focus in this thesis is on the ideology of early community arts and its wider significance.

Emerging in the UK in the late 1960s, community arts was stimulated by artists' unease with the political, social and cultural situation at that time. Antecedents can be traced to those artists working in the community as part of the 'New Deal' in America in the 1930s (Meecham & Sheldon, 2000). In practice community arts in Britain embraced a range of artists and activities. It took as its starting point the notion of empowerment through participation in a creative process, a dislike of cultural hierarchies (specifically the distinctions between high art practice and other forms of creativity located outside the discourses and physical locations of fine art)

and a belief in the creative potential of all sections of society (Morgan, 1995). These concepts are encapsulated in the idea of 'cultural democracy' (Kelly, 1985).

Cultural democracy recognises culture as 'the production and exchange of meanings, or signifying practices, which form that which is distinctive about a way of life' (Barker, 2000: 383). Culture rather than 'art' is made everywhere, but is not necessarily acknowledged as valid or valuable by those nominally in power. Within this framework community arts constructed people as active meaning makers and potential participants in a creative process, rather than passive recipients or consumers of pre-existing artistic forms. Consequently, community artists were not concerned to make the right art, but rather to produce the right conditions within which communities could have their own creative voices recognised and enabled (Harding, 1995). Cultural democracy acknowledges the importance of giving voice to those whose thoughts and opinions are not easily heard within dominant aesthetic or political discourses.

Cultural democracy also represents a counter-argument to the, so-called, 'democratisation of culture' (Kelly, 1985). In particular community artists challenged the view that what people needed was access to cultural outputs (the 'Arts for All' model, (Shaw quoted in Kelly, 1985)), since they questioned who and what determines what constitutes 'art'. Thus whereas those advocating the democratisation of culture sought to bring art to the masses, adherents of cultural democracy encouraged individuals to create and celebrate their own forms of culture, which might not correspond with (and in some cases actively challenged) dominant conceptions of art.

Echoing Bourdieu and Foucault's ideas outlined above, Kelly (1985) argues against the ranking of certain forms of creative activity (drawing, painting, opera, for instance) as inherently more valuable than others, seeing this hierarchy as a means by which the taste of a bourgeois class is sanctioned. Thus, through the process of 'democratisation' a dominant culture is imposed on others whose own creative outputs may not necessarily equate to it, but which are not accorded the equivalent

respect or recognition. This coercive process can be seen as akin to Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic violence' (1979) which describes the non-violent imposition by a dominant class of their systems of meaning, or culture, onto a subordinated group, who by perceiving the dominant class' actions as legitimate, become complicit in their own subordination.

The differentiation between cultural democracy and the democratisation of culture is significant for this thesis, not least because contemporary gallery education appears initially to align itself to the democratisation of culture concept. However, what emerges through the examination of practice in the gallery is also the legacy of cultural democracy. Most notably this is found in the construction of individuals as active makers of meaning and participants in a creative process, rather than recipients of the dominant culture. Likewise the artist educators' task in the gallery is to foster such individuals' meaning making, which takes precedence over the transmission of gallery-sanctioned interpretations.

Community arts' foregrounding of artistic practice also informs artist-led pedagogy in the gallery. During the 1970s and 1980s community artists located artistic practice as a means to enter into productive dialogue with non-artistic constituents. However, this is not artistic practice as espoused under a particular understanding of modernism, wherein art is perceived as synonymous with the rebellious, antagonistic artist existing in 'romantic exile' (Gablik, 1995:5). Rather community arts promoted communication, interaction and engagement to enable participation in the creation of culture. Connections can be made with this positioning of the artist and ideas espoused in the 1930s by Marxist intellectuals and artists, particularly within The Frankfurt School. For example, Walter Benjamin's seminal text *The Author as Producer* (1934) argues for a radical, innovative, socially engaged practice wherein artists are transformed 'from a supplier of the productive apparatus, into an engineer who sees his task in adapting that apparatus to the ends of the proletarian revolution' (*Ibid*, 1934: 102). The artist must collaborate in order to educate and their practice and social activism necessarily becomes one. In the same way, community arts promoted a model of participatory art practice, wherein meaning emerges through

collaborative processes of facilitated dialogue and making activities, at times wedded to political activism.

This process of collective creativity and meaning making is also found in emerging gallery education practices during the same period. Allen & Clive (1995) identify a link between increasing gallery access in the 1970s and 1980s and the development of community arts in the UK. Both recognized the need for artists and arts organisations to explore how art and artistic practice can address issues such as discrimination, marginalisation and oppression. More specific connections have also been identified. According to Harding (1998) Whitechapel Gallery's education and outreach programmes were 'conceived within the context of a rich history of community arts activity in the borough of Tower Hamlets' (*Ibid*: 16). The cross-fertilization informed the philosophy underlying the gallery's work with their local communities.

In particular, Harding (1998) argues that this historic connection to community arts practice provides gallery education with a critical element, which in turn informs its pedagogic processes and ambitions. Community arts sought to raise participants' awareness of their circumstances and abilities by enabling them to engage with and reflect on artistic activities for themselves. In the same way, contemporary gallery education (as described by practitioners such as Toby Jackson (1999) above) encourages learners to connect with, but also question art and the cultural institution through engaging in collaborative interpretive processes. Museums have been identified as 'tried-and-true sources of understandable information, places one can trust to provide reliable, authentic and comprehensible presentations of... objects and ideas' (Falk & Dierking, 2000: 2). However, the education model developed within particular galleries in the 1970s questions many of those assumptions, including truth, authenticity and reliability.

Where the practices of community arts and gallery education diverge, arguably, is in the purposes of this engagement. Community arts prioritised political activism and

advocated radical alternatives to 'conventional' art practice as legitimate outcomes of the process. However, education activities (especially in the gallery) typically position critical and reflective processes as enabling learners to connect with art. Therefore, the extent to which education in the gallery can be seen as a radical practice, opposed to mainstream gallery activity, is debatable. This complex issue is contextualised in the wider examination of community gallery education in chapters eight and nine.

More immediately significant is community arts' legacy of an artist-led participatory practice, involving critical and reflective thinking, since this practice in contemporary art galleries is the focus for my thesis. Also relevant is community arts' construction of art practice as the point where artists, participants and issues meet. By establishing connections between practice and engagement with others, the community arts model provides a starting point from which to examine how and why artist educators' artistic practice informs their pedagogy in the gallery.

2.7 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has continued the examination of theoretical issues that inform contemporary gallery education practice begun in chapter one. In order to establish the context for education in galleries and the artist educators' practice specifically, attention has been given to contrasting concepts of the relationship between viewer and artwork and how meaning is generated within that. Wider cultural issues presented by the institution itself have been considered, with particular focus on how knowledge and power connect to notions of expertise and the implications arising from what galleries choose to display. Historic demarcations of the gallery as a force for social improvement have been outlined and contrasted with more critical approaches adopted by the community arts movement in the 1970s and 1980s.

These different and sometimes conflicting concepts continue to shape the practice's evolution and influence how education is perceived and validated within galleries and

beyond. Hence these ideas are returned to in subsequent chapters. The following chapter, which outlines the research methodology, revisits the concept of art practice as a form of meaning making found within community arts and examines, amongst other issues, the connections that have emerged between my research process, art making and teaching and learning in the gallery.

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3. The research methodology: outlining the case studies and interrogating connections between research, art practice and pedagogy in the gallery

3.1 Introduction

In this thesis connections are made between the subject under investigation and the methodology chosen to research it. Specifically I have identified a relationship between artistic practice (as described in chapter one), the research process and the pedagogic activities under investigation. Originally I understood the research process to be a means of gaining greater understanding about a field of practice, whilst remaining separate from it. However, I have subsequently identified parallels between the inter-subjective, critical and reflexive processes of research and the ongoing activities within my research topic. This has blurred the boundaries between my research subject and how I have chosen to interrogate it.

Whilst these complex connections have become apparent, my relationship with the artist educators participating in the thesis has developed and impacted on the research process and outcomes. At the start of the research I positioned myself as the researcher and the artist educators as sources of research material. My original understanding of our respective roles was based around a conception of ethnography (which itself derives from the classic anthropological model) wherein researcher and researched are differentiated (Brown & Dowling, 1998).

In the ethnographic model the researcher collects detailed information about a segment of society (the objects of research) in the context in which it occurs, in order to generate a description, leading to an analysis, of that society (*Ibid*, 1998). Wright (2004) describes this process as 'becoming familiar with the other' (my emphasis). This ethnographic model traditionally ascribes responsibility for selecting what constitutes relevant data and the principles regarding how that data is interpreted to the researcher (*Op cit*, 1998), whose ultimate ambition is to gain and represent

authoritative knowledge about the objects of research. Whereas the position occupied by the objects of research is passive; they remain as 'the other', to be represented and analysed by the researcher (*Op cit*, 2004).

Within this research, however, my relationship with the artist educators has become more collaborative and participatory. For reasons considered later in this chapter, it has become impossible to characterise the artist educators as separate and passive objects of research. As my engagement with them has progressed, these individuals have taken an important role in developing the themes explored in the thesis and have functioned in some respects as pro-active research participants. Likewise my perception of my position and concerns has shifted from a detached figure researching selected individuals to more of a collaborator engaged in a process of learning with and from the artist educators.

As the thesis developed I examined and made explicit these relationships. There is a need here to recognise the significance of interconnectedness within my research process and its impact on research findings, since in this thesis the research methodology and subject under investigation have become entwined. This has proved useful since, for example, insights gained from reflecting on the research process have informed my thinking regarding pedagogy within the gallery. Likewise the decision to locate myself to some degree as a participant in a process of investigation alongside the artist educators has contributed greatly to my thinking around collaborative teaching and learning.

The importance of this section of the thesis, which addresses the research methodology and rationale, has grown. Notwithstanding that the relationship between research methodology and subject has epistemological, ontological and ethical implications for the thesis (which are addressed below); I believe that investigating these connections enriches the overall thesis. It leads to greater understanding of the pedagogic process being interrogated and the relationship between researcher and

research participant. However, I am also aware of risks and limitations involved in adopting this approach and the need to articulate these.

Hence the scope of this chapter is threefold. The early sections examine perceived connections between artistic practice and research and the implications for this thesis. The subsequent section outlines my choice of the ethnographic case-study as the methodology adopted to investigate the research questions. The following sections describe how initial findings informed the development of the research and addresses how the relationship between the artist educators and myself has shaped the research process and outcomes.

3.2 Examining connections between research and artistic practice

My three research questions are as follows:

- How do selected artist educators construct themselves as 'artists', specifically in terms of the skills, knowledge and experience they perceive they possess?
- How do these selected artist educators perceive they function as educators within a particular gallery's community education programme?
- What function does the particular gallery play in shaping these pedagogic activities?

These questions have been addressed using a qualitative approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). It is specific artists' understandings of particular processes within given situations that are explored here, hence the choice of a research perspective that foregrounds the understanding of individuals' perceptions. Although original research questions were outlined, the study followed an 'emergent' research design (Adler & Adler, 1998). As such, ongoing data collection and research discoveries contributed to and revised the shape and development of the project as a whole (the modification of the research questions being one example of this). I worked inductively, allowing the collection and analysis of existing theoretical and empirical data to guide and inform theory development.

Rather than testing a specific hypothesis, the research aims to identify what meaning certain experiences have for research participants (the selected artist educators and education curators at Tate Modern), given the contexts in which they are located. The research seeks to gain understanding of multifaceted human phenomena, hence the decision to locate the research within a constructivist or interpretive research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). This research recognises that an independent 'reality' does not exist and is knowable only as a construct of individual consciousness. This is in contrast to a positivist view, which conceives of the world as objectively knowable (*Ibid*, 1998). Equally the research assumes an interpretive epistemology, whereby knowledge is understood to be personal, subjective and unique (*Ibid*, 1988). Again this contrasts with the positivist view wherein knowledge is deemed to be fixed, objective and detached (*Ibid*, 1988). The interpretive stance is suitable for this thesis since I am interrogating how the research participants construct themselves as artists and educators and what these particular constructions imply in terms of pedagogy in the gallery.

The epistemological and ontological position taken within this thesis in part reflects my desire to interrogate connections between artistic practice, research and pedagogy. Whilst undertaking this study I observed similarities between my approach to artistic practice and the research process. In particular the shared subjective and exploratory aspects of the two activities led me to question how art practice can be seen as a form of qualitative research. More broadly I became aware of the value of seeing both as meaning making processes.

Researchers within visual arts and education have made general connections between art practice and research, in one instance suggesting that both are concerned with discovering the new (Varto, 2002). Likewise, Raney (2003) considers that 'research' has to a large extent replaced 'expression' as a model for art practice' (*Ibid*, 2003: 5). Thus art's rationale shifts away from the singular portrayal of the artist's inner thoughts and emotions toward more cross-disciplinary and hybrid approaches involving artists investigating and articulating specific issues.

Art making (as with research) can be understood as a continuous and reflexive mode of interrogation, which generates new ways of looking at the world (Brown and Dowling, 1998). This broad understanding permits examination of how qualitative research processes and artistic practice are alike. More specifically I am interested in whether creating, reflecting on, refining and portraying new knowledge, rather than simply documenting or reporting existing information within the context of the two disciplines is comparable.

This link between the process of making art and qualitative research has been made by researchers in the arts and humanities (Eisner, 1997, Prentice, 2000, Simons, 1996) and by artists themselves (Buchler, 2000, Wentworth, 2000). Prentice (2000), for example, celebrates the experiential, exploratory and reflective process experienced by artists and qualitative researchers and argues for higher status to be ascribed to the knowledge generated by this process. Whereas Simons (1996) identifies that in both 'creative' practice and qualitative case study research the focus is on the individual and particular, rather than emphasising universals. She further argues that it is preferable to learn from and be enlightened by specific cases (or individual works of art), rather than seek generalisable evidence from large statistical samples. Prentice (2000), Simons (1996) and Eisner (1997) question the status of 'objective' knowledge in the context of research, with Eisner suggesting that artists or film-makers provide useful models for the qualitative researcher (*Ibid*, 1997) as they are familiar with representing the personal and experiential in ways that challenge existing thinking. These three points: the focus on research as a process of inquiry and reflection, the status of knowledge generated through this process and the significance of representing experiential knowledge to gain greater understanding, resonate in terms of my research methodology and the subject of the thesis.

Furthermore, Prentice (2000), Simons (1996) and Eisner (1997) draw parallels between a particular conception of enquiry that positions the artist as concerned with articulating in visual form their individual perception of reality and a research process that recognises the place of subjectivity in the creation of knowledge. The three

writers also argue for an epistemology that recognises complexity and ambiguity and for validity to be ascribed to experiential as well as theoretical knowledge. I am drawn to this argument, wherein research adopts some of the characteristics and values of artistic practice, rather than artistic practice being required to become more scholarly. Most notably, it provides space for me to investigate and acknowledge the experiential and subjective aspects of my own and the artist educators' practice (whilst fully recognising the epistemological implications of doing this). This appears preferential to confining my research exclusively to a pre-existing and perhaps inappropriate academic model.

Yet despite coming from an art practice background I am conscious that this research falls within the structure of an academic PhD and aspires to make a new and specific contribution to knowledge within an academic, rather than an art practice arena. Hence I am interested in the tensions identified in positioning artistic practice according to an academic model of research and note that issues arise, not in the negotiation of process, but in the validation of outcomes. For example, Buchler (2000) argues that, although artistic practice and research may superficially embrace similar processes of enquiry, the aims of each are fundamentally different:

> The aim of academic research is the production of expert knowledge; the aim of art is the expression of understanding as an account of experience (Buchler, 2000: 23) (my emphasis).

The differentiation and connections between generating 'expert knowledge' and more experiential forms of meaning making run throughout this thesis, not least because as artist and researcher I am juggling my experiences of both. It is relevant therefore, that Buchler recognises personal and experiential knowledge as legitimate outcomes of a research process (in the same way that Prentice (2000), Simonds (1996) and Eisner (1997) argue above), but concludes that academic research culture cannot easily accommodate them. This has led me to question whether my position as PhD researcher necessitates a reworking of the personal and experiential approaches I typically adopt as an artist in order to ensure that my 'output' (the thesis) is judged valid within an academic context.

At the same time I am tempted by Buchler's argument that, rather than reconfigure artistic practice to fit a predetermined research model, artists should remain committed to the discipline of art practice in order to make a valid contribution to academia. Therefore, clarifying what constitutes artistic practice to understand better why it can make a valid (and in the case of a PhD, a new and original) contribution to knowledge is an underlying principle of this thesis. Likewise Buchler's observation that research and practice can and should shift away from a preoccupation with 'outputs' or 'works' towards an emphasis on their mutual processes of critical debate and social engagement (*Ibid*, 2000) provides a model of commonality between the practices. It also supports the focus on process adopted in this thesis.

3.3 Consideration of the art making/research connection with reference to practice-based PhDs

Further analysis of the value of considering artistic practice as research has been undertaken within academia, particularly since the introduction of practice-based PhDs to the UK. My thesis falls outside this category, since it is not my own art practice that is the subject of the thesis. Nonetheless the status of 'the artist-as-researcher' (Tickle, 2003) can again be seen as problematic if art practice moves into an academic domain. Thompson (2000) argues that the intricate balance between theory and practice within fine art can be disrupted by categorising that practice as research. He identifies a danger 'of using theory to justify mediocre practice or, alternatively, of using practice (good, bad or indifferent) as a pretext for sub-standard theoretical work' (*Ibid*, 2000: 36). A delicate interchange between theory (which is defined in chapter four) and the art practice of the artist educators as constructed in this thesis is evident and is examined in later chapters. Tensions have also arisen from my application of theory to the education practices examined here. These are considered in section 3.7.1 below.

The challenge of validating artistic knowledge is addressed by Candlin (2000), who identifies one academic body (The United Kingdom Council for Graduate Education) as having difficulty recognising artistic practice as sufficiently scholarly. It thus does

nothing to unravel the opposition between art as predominantly anti-intellectual and written work as 'properly academic' (*Ibid*, 2000: 101). These tensions with defining and validating knowledge gained through art practice in relation to other forms of meaning contribute to my ideas concerning artists and their particular knowledge. In particular, Thompson (2000) and Candlin's (2000) assertions that knowledge generated through fine art practice needs to be recognised as valid on its own terms, rather than judged according to an academic research model are relevant. Similar issues surface in my examination in chapter eight of the value of assessing knowledge generated by participants in gallery education sessions according to discourses to which artist educators and learners may not necessarily ascribe.

Contrasting with the difficulty of identifying artistic practice as research, the University of Dundee (Macdonald, 2002/2003) investigated what productive links can be established between the disciplines of fine art and anthropology. In this research artists are identified as 'explorers' who investigate how 'the knowledge that people have of the world is generated, organised and transferred' (*Ibid*, 2002/2003: 10). A similar construction of the artist as a 'conceptual investigator' is undertaken in chapter four and recognition of the active exploratory elements of art practice underpins the construction of art making and pedagogy as forms of making meaning throughout this thesis.

Students undertaking practice-based art doctorates have also identified affinities between art making and research (Hockey, 2003). This led these artists to see themselves as individuals with analytic as well as 'creative' capacities. Although I argue, as others have done (Korsuth, 1969, Prentice, 1995), that art making is by definition analytical, it is useful to discover that other artists/research students, have identified connections between the two. However, whilst recognising aspects of research and my artistic process as similar, I am aware of divergences between the two. Specifically I see differences between my ambitions for knowledge generated through this PhD research and work generated through my art practice. Nonetheless

I recognise that any hierarchical validation of more theoretical academic knowledge above more experiential forms of artistic knowing is unresolved.

3.4 New insights: participatory art practice and action research

A tangential, but equally relevant, understanding of the artist-as-researcher can be found in texts exploring participatory art practice. This art practice involves 'a process of dialogue and collaboration [where] the emphasis is on the character of this interaction, not the physical or formal integrity of a given artifact or the artist's experience in producing it' (Kester, 2004:10). Dialogue has been defined in chapter one as central to meaning making activities between individuals. Participatory arts practice is 'dialogical' (*Ibid*, 2004); it foregrounds the interactive character of particular artistic activities.

Examples of this practice include work undertaken by artists groups such as Superflex in Denmark and Platform in the UK. These groups locate themselves within specified communities and work with individuals from that community, engaging in a collaborative process of questioning and critical reflection, wherein the artists' and participants' existing perceptions are challenged. This leads to 'a new set of insights, generated at the intersections of both perspectives and catalysed through the collaborative production of a given project' (*Ibid*, 2004: 95). In other words knowledge emerges through participatory processes.

Similarities to research practice are identifiable. Notably constructing artistic practice as a means of collaboratively developing new knowledge within a given community resembles 'participatory action research' (Reason, 1998). This form of action research, as with participatory art practice, emphasizes dialogue in order to gain new knowledge for all those involved in the process. In turn, dialogic art practice and participatory action research correspond in some respects with gallery education practice as understood in this thesis; there is an emphasis on artists/researchers and participants generating new knowledge collaboratively within a specified context.

Yet pedagogy in the gallery (and my own research methodology) also differs from action research in terms of what it seeks to achieve and the roles of researcher/artist and other participants. My research methodology seeks greater understanding of particular artist educators' practice, but not primarily to enable those practitioners to improve their practice or transform their social, personal or working conditions, as might be expected within an action research project. The artist educators have contributed actively to the thesis' development, but as is examined below, they are participants in the research, not action researchers working alongside me.

Furthermore the interrogation of participatory art practice also reveals how a 'complicit' (Rogoff quoted in Doherty, 2004) relationship between artists and participants can develop within projects and the consequent need to make relations of power explicit. In particular the ethical issue of representing knowledge gained through a collaborative process of investigation emerges in dialogical forms of art practice and in participatory action research. It is notable, for example, that the relatively privileged and powerful position occupied by artists working in community settings (compared to their collaborators) is frequently ignored or misrepresented by commentators and artists.

This imbalance in power can result in the artist 'speaking for' participants in a project and erroneously claiming authority over knowledge gained in the process (Kester, 2004). The same issue emerges in participatory action research. For, as Reason identifies 'one of the key questions about research is the political one; who owns the knowledge, and thus who can define the reality?' (*Ibid*, 1998: 67). As I have discovered through this research and in previous gallery education evaluations (Pringle, 2002(b)), the negotiation and representation of new knowledge gained through a collaborative process is not a transparent issue. It has implications for my relationship with the selected artist educators and for the artist educators' relationships with participants in gallery education workshops. This issue is returned to in section 3.7 below.

Reflecting on my artistic practice in comparison to research practice has increased my understanding of artist educators' artistic and pedagogic activities and assisted the investigation of my first two research questions in particular. Therefore, throughout the research process I have actively sought to consider and include my own actions as an artist-researcher in parallel with the artist educators' activities. This is reflected in this thesis, most notably in chapter six's descriptive interpretation of a community education session, which derives from my observations of the practice in the gallery and is informed by my own experiences. The thesis also includes excerpts from my research journals where appropriate, alongside interview data.

3.5 The research design of this thesis and choice of the case study

This thesis uses a qualitative case study approach (Gillham, 2000). This decision was informed by relevant research methodology literature (Brown & Dowling 1998, Cohen *et al*, 2002, Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, Gillham, 2000), my community gallery education experience and the research questions. Of primary concern in this thesis are selected artists' perceptions of themselves and how these inform their relationships with participants and art objects. But I am also interested in whether the particular environment and philosophy of the gallery where they work (which in turn is shaped by broader policy, socio-cultural and theoretical issues) impacts on their perceptions and activities. The case study appears to be the most appropriate approach to take, since:

> It provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply presenting them with abstract theories or principles (Cohen *et al*, 2002:181)

The emphasis on 'real people in real situations' chimes with this thesis' concern to acknowledge the complexity of the lived practice in specific contexts. However, within case studies there is a need to clarify the relationship between the people and the context in which they are operating, whilst delimiting the area of research interest (Brown & Dowling, 1998).

Consequently this thesis is designed as a series of tiered case studies. The primary focus of this research is five selected artist educators, each being an individual case study. These artist educators are considered specifically within the context of the 'Art into Life: Gallery Introductions for Community Groups' (AiL) strand of the community programme, which itself constitutes a defined case study within the constituency of the gallery's education programme as a whole. The final case study is Tate Modern itself, which has been differentiated from other contemporary art galleries for the purposes of this research. The rationale for choosing these particular case studies is given in section 3.6 below.

3.5.1 Addressing validity issues

My adoption of this research design was influenced by my knowledge of contemporary gallery education practice and experience of how artists are employed as educators in contemporary art galleries. The model commonly adopted (particularly amongst smaller galleries) is for artists to be employed on a freelance basis, usually for the duration of a temporary exhibition, in order to work on a series of education activities with schools. Community education is more likely to be undertaken as outreach activities, again by an artist employed on a temporary contract. Although artists may work for the same gallery on a number of occasions, it is rare they receive longer-term contracts or become members of staff at the institution. It would have been difficult to examine the influence of an institution's philosophy and methodological approaches on artists' pedagogic activities had this research focused exclusively on individual artists, without locating them in the context of a particular gallery.

A second factor is the heterogeneous character of contemporary gallery education. Galleries have developed individual philosophies, working practices and, in some cases, audiences and although similarities are detectable across the field, it is arguable that each gallery presents a specific scenario. Given the recognised lack of research across the field of gallery education (see chapter one), I am aware of a

potential conflict between the focus on a particular case and the pressure to generalise to assist the development of theory across the discipline. However, existing research into museum and gallery education has been criticised for its tendency to generalise across essentially distinct categories, leading to imprecision and oversimplification (Allen, 2002). This thesis seeks to avoid those failings by concentrating on selected artists in the context of one strand of an education programme within one institution. It aims to contribute to a greater understanding of the phenomena of artist-led community education activities in contemporary art galleries by focusing on detail within the case studies. This is to interrogate the practice, rather than to make comparisons with other institutions.

Therefore, although the desired intention is to inform the theory and practice of contemporary gallery education, the validity of this study will derive primarily from providing insights into the particular research questions. Hence, the cases under investigation are not intended to be 'typical' examples, but have been chosen because they exhibit features I perceive are relevant to this investigation. Equally, it is not intended that this study should justify itself in terms of the repeatability of findings, or the extent to which any cause-and-effect relationships identified within it can be generalised to other contexts, so-called 'external validity' (Bassey, 1999). Nonetheless the research will attempt to demonstrate 'internal validity' (*Ibid*, 1999) by ensuring that theories or explanations drawn from the data are entirely consistent with it.

Without contradicting what has been stated above, the study will seek to draw out commonalities. By revealing what others see as their experience, the research aims to provide broad insights for the reader into the issues under investigation, a process described as 'naturalistic generalisation' (Stake, 2000). This departs from a positivistic understanding of the process, since the reader undertakes the generalisation, as opposed to the researcher. Connections can be made between this process and the knowledge communicated by an artwork, since 'by studying the uniqueness of the particular, we come to understand the universal' (Simonds, 1996:

231). Although it is unlikely that this research will throw up 'universal' understandings, the link between the specifics of the case study and the art object and the extent to which either can engender broader theoretical understanding has implications within the gallery.

In the same way that existing theory informs this particular research, it is hoped that through a process of 'analytic generalization' (Yin, 1994), the results of the case study will contribute to future gallery education theory. However, this thesis is not intended as uncritical advocacy for the sector. Selwood (2003) considers that current research on the impact of cultural projects suffers from a lack of methodological rigour or sufficient critical analysis, which ultimately undermines the validity of claims being made for the work. This thesis avoids such charges, by ensuring that the research process and outcomes are clearly and comprehensively reported and by paying frequent attention to the specific research questions under investigation. The research has also benefited from opportunities I have taken to check the accuracy of the findings with the research participants on an ongoing basis.

3.5.2 Data collection and analysis

The primary method of data collection involved interviews with artist educators and education curators. A first round of semi-structured interviews was conducted between June and October 2003 with five artist educators, two members of the Interpretation and Education department who co-ordinate the community programme and two other curators from within the department. Typically interviews followed a general format; they took place on a one to one basis, lasted between one to two hours, were recorded and transcribed and were loosely based upon an interview schedule (See Appendix Three). These interviews were followed by a group interview in June 2004 with the artist educators and two community education curators. This group encounter took up and expanded on the issues discussed in the individual interviews. It followed a looser format (there was no interview schedule), but was also recorded and transcribed. Following that group interview were

numerous informal unrecorded conversations with the artist educators and education curators. The interview transcripts and notes from these conversations form part of the research data.

Data collection also involved observation of several workshop sessions in the gallery. Relevant data from these observation notes, particularly concerning learners' perceptions are used (notably to inform the descriptive interpretation outlined in chapter six) to contextualise and corroborate the research participants' perceptions. I have also maintained a research journal throughout and, as noted above, excerpts from this give my perspective.

The different forms of data collected provide insights into the experiences and perceptions of the various participants. Through a systematic analysis of this data, key themes have been identified which provide insights into the three research questions. Data has been analysed manually using the 'constant comparative method' (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), wherein ongoing inductive category coding is combined with a simultaneous comparison of all units of meaning identified. A 'unit of meaning' can be understood as an identifiable section of data which evidences a specific issue. Using the constant comparative method, each new unit of meaning is identified; it is compared to all other units of meaning and subsequently grouped with similar units. If there are no similar units, a new category is formed. This method has allowed salient points to emerge and connections to be made. Contradictions have also surfaced, particularly between the artist educators' perceptions of themselves and their activities and my understandings based on observation. These divergent perspectives, which illuminate the variety of the practice, are interrogated in chapters seven, eight and nine.

3.6 Background to the case studies

3.6.1 Tate Modern

Opened in the converted Bankside power station in 2000, Tate Modern is a flagship institution whose primary function is to house the national collection of international modern and contemporary art. As Toby Jackson acknowledged, from the time of its opening Tate Modern embraced the concept of an 'expanded role for the art gallery in the twenty-first century' (Jackson, 2000(a):1). This expanded role included displaying the collection in ways that avoided presenting not a single history or one unfolding story, but presenting many stories through 'subtle juxtapositions of 'experience'' (Serota, 2000: 55).

Tate Modern's ambitions also included broadening its educational and social role, by 'finding new ways to root itself in its locality and encouraging a wide range of visitors, not just those with an ideological affinity with modern art, or those professional groups who are comfortable in the gallery' (*Ibid*, 2000(a):1). The gallery therefore combines a curatorial policy that intends to broaden, complicate and possibly challenge the spectator's understanding of the work through the particular hang of the collection (Serota, 2000), with a commitment to engaging with new audiences. Its philosophy recognises enquiry, reflexivity and an engagement with the new. As such, philosophically as well as practically, it provides a useful scenario in which to locate this thesis.

Tate Modern's Interpretation and Education Department has a particular philosophy and methodology, in place since the gallery opened. The principles underpinning this methodology have been described as 'plural and shifting readings, making links between modern art and visitors' cultural experiences, creating a culture of debate, turning consumers into producers' (Jackson, 2000(a):1). These principles, which highlight the learner as active and draw attention to the importance of visitor experience, inform the 'Ways In' framework, through which the education programme operates and which is examined in chapter seven. For this thesis it is particularly

useful that Tate Modern clearly identifies these pedagogical tenets, since in my experience it is unusual for a gallery to do so. By making explicit its philosophy and methodology, Tate Modern provides a comprehensible theoretical context within which artist educators operate. However, the extent to which these practitioners adhere to the principles outlined by the gallery during their workshop sessions is debatable.

3.6.2 'Art into Life' and the Community Education Programme

A broad range of programmes operate within Tate Modern's Interpretation and Education Department. These range from talks and discussions, through to symposia, seminars and lectures, gallery tours and groups; courses and workshops to family, school, community and youth programmes.

The programme for community groups is well established in the institution. Indeed, a programme of outreach activities was established prior to the Bankside building opening. The gallery based activities encompass 'Art into Life: Gallery Introductions for Community Groups', (AiL) (the workshops focused on in this research) which are 60 to 90 minute introductory sessions led by artist educators that are targeted primarily at first time visitors. Tate Modern also provides 'Open Tate', a professional development programme for community group leaders and support staff. This series of two day courses supports group leaders in making use of Tate as 'an interesting place to visit and as a valuable educational resource' (Cox, & Keiser, 2003: 5) and are based around small group work in the two galleries. Tate Modern's 'Community Advocates Programme', which aims to develop partnerships with the local community through working with a number of community representatives, involves evening workshop sessions in the gallery.

3.6.3 The Artist Educators

Tate Modern employs a core team of 'artist educators' (the title they are given at the gallery) who work consistently within the Interpretation and Education Department. A team of five artist educators work on the community programme and lead the Art into Life workshops. They are also involved in planning, co-ordinating and evaluating strands of the programme. Each has worked at Tate Modern since it opened. The stability, cohesion and longevity of the relationship between these artist educators and the gallery has, I would argue, enabled them to develop and reflect on the relationship between their artistic and pedagogic practices, in the context of that particular institution, in ways not so easily afforded by infrequent freelance teaching contracts. These artist educators – Liz Ellis, Michèle Fuirer, Michaela Ross, Esther Sayers and Lucy Wilson – have encouraged me to disclose their names. I consider the characteristics of these educators in chapter four, but note here that the fact they are all white women is broadly representative of the make-up of artist educators working in galleries.

The focus of this thesis has shifted and developed as it has progressed, not least because of my relationship with the research participants. As theoretical and empirical data accumulated I refined my original research questions and narrowed the parameters of the research. The reasons for these modifications are outlined now.

3.7 Refinements to the research design

3.7.1 The focus on the 'Art into Life' strand of the Community Programme

Originally this research focused on artist educators in the context of the community and schools programmes at Tate Modern, as the five practitioners have experience of both. However, as this thesis progressed, and particularly following the completion of an earlier evaluation I conducted on strands of the community programme on behalf of Tate Modern (Pringle, 2002a), I decided to concentrate on aspects of the

community programme only. The reasons for this have themselves shifted, but are discussed below.

In early stages I was keen to foreground a specific theoretical context for this research. In particular, I intended to explore whether two fundamental aspects of a model of critical pedagogy (the 'dialogical' model (Shor & Friere, 1987)) apply in the gallery context. These are self and social empowerment as possible and legitimate outcomes of the learning process and attainment of critical consciousness through the making and remaking of knowledge by teacher and learner (Friere, 1973). From this the research aimed to understand how artist educators' activities and the dialogical model can be located within current policy discourses concerning cultural exclusion and the role the arts can play in transforming society (see chapter one).

I saw the community programme at Tate Modern as fertile ground for investigating these areas. As with many galleries, at Tate Modern the task of engaging with 'non-traditional' audiences or those perceived as disadvantaged (Sandell, 2002) largely falls to the community programme curators. Aware that their work functions within current political and socio-cultural discourses surrounding social exclusion, these education curators (and artist educators) have written on the subject (Cox & Sillis 2002, Ellis 2002). Speaking with them during my earlier evaluation of the programme they expressed a strong desire for their practice to be researched in greater detail (Pringle 2002(a)). As Liz Ellis acknowledges:

> My experience, in fifteen years of arts education work, is that arts educators are constantly attempting to evaluate, question and improve their work. It is crucial that we assess whether access projects do in fact widen the profile of gallery audiences or challenge inequalities (Ellis, 2002: 42)

Embracing reflectivity and epistemological uncertainty in her own work (and perceiving it in other arts educators' preoccupations), Liz seeks to interrogate the practice to gain understanding and clarity in relation to the claims being made for it. Her approach therefore corresponds with my ambitions for this thesis.

Although the schools' programme operates within the overall pedagogic framework referred to above, its activities are specifically developed to complement the National Curriculum and classroom practice generally (www.tate.org.uk). The schools' programme foregrounds learning outcomes connected to pupils' 'knowledge and understanding of Tate's unique collection of modern and contemporary art' (www.tate.org.uk). This suggests that issues of self and cultural empowerment are less significant outcomes than they might be in a programme targeted at groups and organisations new to galleries and modern art.

The community programme aims to encourage groups to use and enjoy the gallery through engendering an attitude of questioning and enabling participants to make connections between modern art and their own lives (Cox & Keizer, 2003). Thus in comparison with the schools' programme, the community programme appears less specifically concerned with conveying knowledge about the collection and more about engaging with the institution as a whole and fostering a climate of accessibility and dialogue. These more overt connections between the community programme's philosophy and the dialogical model's concerns with empowerment and remaking knowledge (alongside curators' and artist educators' desire to engage in further research) prompted the refinement of my initial range of enquiry away from the schools' programme.

However as the research progressed I became less comfortable with the broad application of the dialogical model to the community programme. The artist educators voiced disquiet over the use of this model to 'explain' the practice in a group interview in April 2004, which led me to question whether the reality of practice in the gallery was too complicated and specific to be adequately theorised in this way. I found a comment by Michaela Ross in this group interview, where she critiqued my use of the dialogical model in relation to gallery education, insightful:

> What value does it have to once again reassert and reconfirm that particular model... It's much more valuable to rethink the model and what different models would look like, rather than identifying and attacking an old model.

This emphasis on the exploration of new models, rather than seeing a practice wholly in terms of its relationship to pre-existing concepts suggested a way forward. Later in the same interview Michaela advocated interrogating and describing the details of the practice, since she saw pedagogy in the gallery as too dynamic and contextualised to be neatly defined according to particular theoretical models, which are necessarily static. Recognising the organic and specific nature of the process she referred to, I took on board her suggestions. Therefore in this thesis I have adopted a 'grounded' approach (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000), wherein theory is constructed as emergent and arising from particular situations.

At the same time my interest in art practice as a form of conceptual enquiry and meaning making had developed and I sought to consider how this construction could inform an understanding of artist educators' pedagogic practice. Thus although the dialogical model informs the contextualisation of pedagogy in the gallery in chapter nine, the focus of the thesis has shifted. Instead my central concern is exploring how these artist educators' understanding of themselves as artists informs their relationship with gallery artworks and their construction of learners as active meaning makers.

The community programme remains a crucial context for investigating how the artist educators' artistic and pedagogic approaches correspond with the programme's ambitions to foster learner engagement. Each strand of the community programme has informed this research, however the 90 minute Art into Life sessions exhibit key features of the pedagogic exchange between artist educator, art work and learner. These features reflect the context of Tate Modern as a learning environment and indicate the artist educators' particular approaches.

3.7.2 The focus on the artist educators

A further refinement to the research concerns the move from investigating the perceptions of educators and learners to focus exclusively on artist educators. This

thesis addresses specific artist educators' practice and, as noted, the primary method of data collection has involved semi-structured interviews with these artist educators. However, an identified weakness of the case study method is the possibility that, because results are not easily open to cross checking, they may be overly selective and biased (Cohen *et al*, 2002). As noted above, existing research into cultural organisations and their impacts is seen to suffer from this.

There is a tendency for claims to be made regarding the impact of the arts on visitors which are not sufficiently supported by rigorous or long-term empirical evidence gathered from those visitors (Selwood, 2003). Therefore, although it is artists' perceptions of themselves and their pedagogic activities that are under investigation, exploring the extent to which others (in particular learners) share these perceptions could avoid accusations of selectivity and bias. Indeed, my original intention was to examine the community programme from the perspective of artists, education staff and learners. This broader reaching, but necessarily more superficial approach to the research has been superseded by my recognising the value of the artists' experiences.

In particular, rather than examining art practice and artist-led pedagogy as separate entities, my research questions reflect my interest in establishing how the first (practice) informs the second (pedagogy). In other words I am interested as much in why artists work in specific ways in galleries, as much as what they do. Learners' perspectives, although important, may not illuminate why artists focus on experiential learning in front of artworks. However, detailed analysis of the experiential aspects of artists' practice provides insights into how artists connect their art making activities with their work with learners. I therefore focus my attention on these artist educators' perceptions (and draw on the experience of other art practitioners) to interrogate details of the art process.

3.7.3 The importance of the interviews

A further development informing the decision to focus on the artist educators' perceptions only emerged through the first round of interviews with these individuals. The amount and richness of the data generated during these interviews exceeded my initial expectations; the artist educators discussed at length their artistic and pedagogic practice and the broader context in which they work. This provided crucial insights into the issues addressed by the research questions and the space required to analyse and do justice to this rich data fully occupies the designated length of this thesis. Indeed, unless specified all quotations from artist educators in the thesis are taken from these individual interviews. Where appropriate I have edited these quotations to remove repetitions and hesitations.

As noted in chapter one, there are few texts that address artistic practice and its relationship to pedagogy in the gallery in detail, or derive their conclusions from data collected from artists. The role of the artist educator is under-researched and as Xanthoudaki *et al* (2003) comment:

> There is an international as well as local need for museum and gallery educators to investigate their work on a systematic research footing, to build the whole community's practices on the most enlightened understanding possible (*Ibid*, 2003: 3).

Arguments which highlight the lack of research by gallery educators give me confidence that there is a need for rigorous research that specifically addresses the educator's perspective.

Therefore, this thesis focuses on these artist educators' perceptions of themselves and their activities in the gallery. And although there is clear value to be gained from long term and comprehensive research that investigates whether or not the artist educators' perceived outcomes are being achieved, that is not examined here. Therefore, this thesis does not constitute an evaluation of the community programme within the case study, but an attempt to gain greater understanding of artist-led education activities and the connection to art practice. The questions posed to

interviewees during the semi-structured interviews were designed to elicit information about how artists and education curators saw themselves and their practices. It is the meanings these individuals derive from these processes that is significant, not the outcomes of their activities and how these are perceived by learners.

The original choice of semi-structured interviews as the main method of data collection reflects the aims and epistemological position of the thesis. By using semi-structured interviews (as opposed to questionnaires or structured interviews), I was aiming to explore complex issues in detail and generate knowledge through conversation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2002). Although the questions to be covered were given in advance to interviewees, the emphasis during actual interviews was on allowing respondents to develop themes, share experiences and explore emerging issues that did not necessarily relate to the original schedule.

At the same time I was keen not to inadvertently omit discussing key issues during interviews and identification of the key questions helped avoid this. Generally as each interview was drawing to a close the interviewee and I would return to the original questions and revisit those we both considered had not been covered. In that way gaps in the data, if not closed, were at least acknowledged. With these interviews I was also conscious of the balance between the desire for comparable data and the essentially unique and personalised information I wanted to gather. Although my intention was to understand their perceptions of particular situations and the meanings they generate, I intended to make comparisons subsequently and build up a picture of the relationship between artists' practice and artist-led pedagogy. My decision to engage in semi-structured as opposed to unstructured interviews was influenced by the need for comprehensive data that would in some way be comparable, but was also affected by my location as the interviewer in relation to the interviewee.

During interviews I volunteered information about my experiences and articulated my opinions. I was concerned there should be no pretence that I was an objective,

detached researcher. Instead I wanted to establish a climate of openness, intellectual and emotional engagement and trust, where the interviewees and I were 'coequals who are carrying on a conversation about mutually relevant, often biographically critical, issues' (Denzin, & Lincoln, 1998: 36). Originally, this decision was partly informed by my reading of feminist epistemology and the recognition that the position occupied by the researcher shapes how knowledge is constructed.

However, as the interviews progressed, one key theme to emerge was the research participants' perception that artist-led pedagogy in the gallery is collaborative and based around dialogue. This conception of learning occurring through the sharing of knowledge is consistent with the co-constructivist model of pedagogy (as described in chapter one), but also seemed true of the interview situations in which we were engaged. Rather than adopting clearly defined active and passive positions, the interviewees and I appeared to be engaged in a process of collaborative research. Each of us seemingly operated as 'co-learners' (Carnell & Lodge, 2002), participating in dialogue, exchanging ideas and generating shared knowledge that neither could have attained alone. My role as interviewer became more active; I did not confine myself to simply questioning or prompting interviewees, but articulated my thoughts, responded to questions and described my experiences.

These interviews have given me broad insights into the pedagogic process. Throughout the process of conducting these interviews and whilst observing sessions in the gallery, I noted down in my research journal any impressions or concerns. Through studying these notes and transcripts of the interviews I am aware how my learning emerges partly as a process of comparing my observations and the perceptions of the interviewees, to my own experiences. My knowledge is subsequently refined and developed in light of these comparisons. For example, one entry in the research journal that was written following an observation session and a short informal conversation with the artist educator reads as follows:

> I was interested in Liz's comments about the difficulty of maintaining a good dialogue when the gallery is so crowded and noisy. The group was so big that they could not hear each other's comments and she ended up essentially

> giving individual 'mini' tutorials to each person. Having always worked in smaller, less crowded galleries I don't think I've come across this problem, but I could see that was what was happening and I need to be aware of the problems it creates – the dialogical model seems to break down in these circumstances (Research Journal entry. July 8th 2003.)

Key points are evident in this quotation; the emphasis on experience as providing the means through which learning occurs, the revision of my existing knowledge in light of what the artist educator told me and my observations and the value of critically reflecting on the process of learning. Each of these are central to the processes I am engaging with and, although I do not undertake an investigation into learners' perceptions here, by positioning myself as a learner to some extent I have gained insights into whether gallery engagement can be collaborative.

In this way the interview process, in particular, has contributed to my overall understanding of the pedagogic process I am researching in unexpected, but useful ways. It has been valuable to consider connections between my learning processes and those of learners in an Art into Life session. My interview experiences have led me to consider the significance of the pre-existing knowledge possessed by learners or interviewees (relative to the interviewer or 'teacher') and how this knowledge is valued by both. The interviews also highlight the delicate balance of power that exists in teacher/learner or interviewer/interviewee relationships, which again is a central concern of this thesis.

3.8 My relationship with the artist educators and their role as research participants

The example of co-learning outlined above suggests a particular relationship with the artist educators. These individuals have actively contributed to the examination of the research questions. The relationship has been possible partly because of who the artist educators are and how I stand in relation to them. Each of the five: Liz Ellis, Michèle Fuirer, Michaela Ross, Esther Sayers and Lucy Wilson are highly experienced, knowledgeable and effective artist educators, as evidenced by their length of employment at Tate and elsewhere (see Appendix One for detailed

biographies supplied by the research participants). Alison Cox and Joleen Keizer, the two education curators working on the community programme are equally experienced. Each approach their practice critically and reflectively and have worked in a variety of gallery and other visual art and educational contexts. They are all women over the age of thirty.

These biographical details are relevant. Whilst reflecting on the initial interviews I recognised that I have much in common with them; from my education and training to my gallery experience. I selected as my research subjects individuals who were my peers (if not my seniors) in terms of experience and involvement in the practice I was investigating. Recognition of our shared interests made my position as detached researcher and the artist educators as research subjects appear irrelevant. As an entry in my research journal identifies:

> My conversation with Liz has been so useful. I am aware that I test ideas out on her, but also that I learn so much from what she tells me. I have an interdependent relationship with the interviewees and the more I share ideas with them, the more I get out of it (Research Journal entry. 5th November 2004).

Consequently, as the research progressed it became more revealing and valuable to foreground my own and the artist educators' shared interests and recognise the participatory aspects of the investigation. In the 2004 group interview with the five artist educators and two education curators their status as participants, rather than research subjects was discussed. Although the interviewees did not commit to being formally identified at that point, one exchange demonstrates their knowledge of research practices and their approach to sharing knowledge and working collaboratively:

> **Michèle Fuirer (MF)**: I'd like to think about the anonymity thing because in a sense the way you are describing the research process, if it is a bit like co-making a bit of work, then it's like authoring a piece of work together and it's not anthropology and it's not social science where you are protecting someone's role within a community
> **Michaela Ross (MR)**: Yes!
> **MF**: Then I'm not sure. I might feel fine about being out and proud. I need to think about it some more. This is quite new information.....

> **Liz Ellis (LE)**: Personally, if I am going to put a considerable amount of work into this, which I want to do, then I want to be named.
> **Emily Pringle (EP)**: Fine.
> **LE:** Because I feel that is my contribution (Group Interview transcript).

Subsequently the artist educators and these curators informed me they wished to be formally acknowledged within the research. The two other education curators are not however designated as research participants. Hence their names are not given in the thesis and the use of pseudonyms (Tim and David) is employed throughout.

The artist educators' involvement extends beyond their formal identification. More significant is their contribution to the investigation of my research questions. I have noted above how discussions during the group interview caused me to reconsider how theory and practice are negotiated within gallery education itself, but also within this thesis. In particular their concerns regarding the limitations of the dialogical model in the context of community education helped shift my thinking. At the time I found these comments enlightening as evidenced by my subsequent comments:

> **EP**: What I take from this conversation, and it has come out in all the interviews, is the very subtle and complex relationship between theory and practice... What I was doing was quite heavy-handedly applying theory to practice and actually the relationship between theory, be it pedagogic theory or cultural theory, and the reality of the practice, maybe it can't be done in that way?
> **MF/LE**: Yes (Group Interview transcript).

Without this exchange of ideas and experiences I would not, I believe, have questioned my original assumptions or reflected on my examination of the practice. Furthermore, although the original interviews were conducted with the artist educators some time ago, the dialogue has continued throughout the research process. I have gained knowledge from these communications; where ideas and opinions are expounded, developed and reflected upon in an atmosphere of mutual co-operation and support.

The dialogue with the research participants contributes to my thinking about the pedagogic experience in the gallery, where the same conditions are aspired to. An

example of this exchange presents itself here. Each artist educator was sent an earlier draft of this text and responding to the last sentence, Michèle Fuirer wrote:

> [The] gallery education experience does not, or need not, aspire to 'mutual co-operation and support' unreservedly, of course. Sometimes it is not a product of collaborative exchange. There will be moments (and I think we talked about this) when you need to recognize the assertion of the artist educator, where their voice may stand as a corrective, or against and distinctly apart from the voice of the group (an obvious example of this would be where something sexist or racist was emerging). There is, in my view, a continual (and fascinating) duality (her emphasis) in the role in terms of collaboration and co-operation; where as artist educator I am both inside and outside the group and the learning experience (email correspondence, October 2005)

This comment adds to my understanding of contemporary gallery education, but also highlights the delicate balance within collaborative learning situations. It encouraged me to recognise that the artist educator's authority and expertise are central to the gallery learning experience. This is not to position them as didacts, but more to clarify that their specific experience and knowledge (for example of art practice, art history and the institution itself), and how they share those during the learning process, necessarily determines the relatively powerful position they occupy in relation to learners.

Whereas I have identified myself as an equal in relation to the artist educators and feel comfortable engaging in challenging and discursive exchanges with them, learners in the gallery may not feel so empowered. Equally, as Michèle identifies, there are situations where for ethical reasons, the artist educator adopts a more detached, authoritative stance. These issues are examined in chapters eight and nine, but I note here that Michèle's comments added to my awareness that pedagogy in the gallery involves nuances of collaboration that constantly shift and develop.

Knowledge generated through a collaborative process also presents ethical issues regarding representation and ownership. Reason (1998) articulates the difficulty of retaining shared ownership of knowledge if one person (the researcher) is charged with the responsibility of writing up. The act of writing about other's experiences

serves to repossess that experience as an academic subject that can be studied from the outside, hence removing control from participants (*Ibid*, 1998). Liz Ellis articulates the potential difficulty of taking knowledge generated through a collaborative process into another context:

> I think it's incredibly useful that there can be PhD research that comes out of this because this whole aspect of reflective thought isn't documented enough and this area of work isn't thought enough about. But I get anxious when I see it within an academic context when I feel that all sorts of people will be listening who will be bringing different sets of agendas (Group Interview).

This concern, combined with the artist educators' generosity and willingness to participate, made it essential that I negotiate the ownership and representation of this process of knowledge creation respectfully. In order to accomplish this I have shared my process and findings with the artist educators as much as possible, through informal meetings, group presentations and emails detailing my activities. Each artist educator has had the opportunity to read through a final draft prior to submission.

Whilst I have attempted to encourage an environment of collaborative enquiry, I am aware of the Institute of Education, University of London doctoral requirements, which state that the thesis must consist of:

> [A student's] own account of their investigations.... The PhD thesis must form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject, affording evidence of originality either by the discovery of news facts or by the exercise of independent critical judgement (Institute of Education, 2004: 8)

In order to satisfy these requirements it is inevitable that, although the research process has involved collaborative enquiry at times, at a critical point I assumed responsibility for, and ownership of, the thesis itself. I have developed ideas and formulated conclusions independently and in this way have reverted to a role more akin to a traditional ethnographer, rather than a co-learner. This realisation of the limits to the artist educators' contribution has caused me to change their nomenclature from 'collaborative researcher' (as I titled them for much of the research) to 'research participant'.

Parallels can again be drawn between research and participatory art practice. In the latter it has been noted that the need to respect the participating community must be balanced with artists' desire to develop and gain recognition for their own artistic practice (Kester, 2004). This balance is best achieved by artists developing sustained and trusting relationships with participants in order to gain knowledge alongside them, rather than negotiating these forms of engagement primarily to receive external validation (*Ibid*, 2004). I would hope that my sustained relationship with the artist educators and the degree of trust that has developed between us has achieved the necessary balance Kester advocates.

3.9 Summary and conclusion

This chapter elaborates on the rationale for this thesis outlined in chapter one. It clarifies why a particular methodology has been adopted and describes how that methodology developed according to findings emerging over the course of the research. Perceived connections between art practice and research have been considered. The benefits and complications arising from my more collaborative relationship with the selected artist educators and education curators have also been outlined. Reflecting on these issues has provided insights into my research process and the implications of adopting a particular methodology. It has also strengthened my investigation of the research questions.

The thesis is complicated, not least because it draws together different disciplines and makes connections across fields. These connections are developed through the research methodology chosen, but also in the focus of the study itself throughout the remainder of the thesis. The following chapter addresses the first research question and outlines a specific construction of the artist. This shares characteristics with the researcher as outlined here.

4. Constructing the artist as a conceptual investigator and examining artists' knowledge

4.1 Introduction

My first research question asks 'how do selected artist educators understand themselves to be 'artists', specifically in terms of their knowledge, skills and experiences'. It is the focus for this chapter. Starting with an investigation of what being an artist means to the research participants, the analysis draws on particular art historical ideas to consider different constructions of the artist and art practice. The framing of the artist as 'conceptual investigator' (which I developed) is outlined and expanded upon through an examination of artistic epistemology in the chapter's final section. The identification of what artists know provides a basis on which to consider whether connections exist between artists' expertise, their art practice and their education activities.

One reason for examining artistic epistemology is to understand if the research participants circumscribe artists according to what they know, or whether artists are better understood in terms of what they do. The relationship between knowing and doing is a central concern throughout this thesis, as is the connection between theory and practice. Furthermore, how knowledge and experience contribute to the making of meaning forms a further interconnected thread running through this thesis. This chapter interrogates these concerns in detail to comprehend varied perceptions of how artists function better.

4.2 Defining key terms

The terms 'conceptual' and 'investigator' and 'theory' and 'practice' surface throughout, but what do they mean in the context of this thesis? An outline of 'conceptual art' is given later in this chapter and the expression 'conceptual investigator' is intended to reflect the relationship between ideas and action. 'Conceptual' foregrounds the intellectual aspect of art making, whereas 'investigator'

acknowledges the active, experiential elements of practice. The construction of the artist as conceptual investigator thus identifies them as exploring and articulating their ideas and hence resembles the artist as researcher model outlined in the previous chapter.

The concept of 'practice' is described in chapter one as a productive activity; practice is what artists do. However in this thesis practice is not set in opposition to theory. In contrast with art critic Clement Greenberg's ideas that art making is an activity beyond theory (Greenberg, 1961), my understanding of practice recognises the place theoretical knowledge plays in the creation and interpretation of artwork. This in turn requires clarifying what is meant by theoretical knowledge and here I turn to definitions from an art historical perspective; to literature from the discipline of cultural studies and to texts that characterise professional knowledge.

For instance, Harris (2006) sees theory in the realm of art history as deriving from consideration of core principles and methods. Therefore a theoretical understanding of painting involves 'knowledge of, and reflection upon, the materials, skills, traditions, conventions, meanings, and values that have constituted the varieties of this form over hundreds of years' (*Ibid*, 2006: 324). He suggests that theory constitutes a body of accumulated knowledge which can assist the understanding and development of artistic practice, and allow for reconsideration of the self and existing organising beliefs. This reflexivity chimes with Barker's (2000) definition of theory as 'narratives which seek to distinguish and account for general features which describe, define and explain persistently perceived occurrences' (*Ibid*, 2000: 33). His emphasis is on theory providing generalised accounts of individual events in the world. Coming from the field of cultural studies Barker also acknowledges that theory can be instrumental; it offers 'new tools by which to think about our world' (*Ibid*, 2000: 33). In this sense theory derives from, but also informs actions in the world and hence is always implicit in empirical research (or in this context artistic practice) through such things as choice of topic or the concepts through which it is discussed and interpreted. Thus Barker and Harris see theory as ever present in practice; a consideration useful in relation to

the research participants' perceptions of the theory/practice connection and pedagogy in the gallery.

Further conceptualisations of theory are found in literature relating to professional epistemology. Particular texts (Eraut, 1994, Polyani, 1967, Ryle, 1949) also analyse different forms of knowledge, which helps inform understanding of what constitutes theoretical knowledge. However, the term 'knowledge' is convoluted and embraces a range of meanings. The Concise Oxford English dictionary gives four separate categories; familiarity gained by experience; person's range of information; theoretical or practical understanding and the sum of what is known (Sykes, 1979). Furthermore, confusion arises from the sometimes arbitrary separation between knowledge, skills and attitudes (Eraut,1994) and additional categories have been suggested, including the notion of 'tacit knowledge' (Polyani, 1967) to describe that which we know, but cannot tell. While it is important to gain clarity about what constitutes knowledge, this is not easily achieved. For the purposes of this thesis the term knowledge refers to the whole domain in which more specifically defined meanings, including theoretical knowledge for example, are grouped.

Within the literature on professional knowledge a range of terms are used in relation to different forms of knowledge. I am interested in concepts relating to practice, hence am drawn to Eraut's (1994) conception of 'practical knowledge' as that 'which is expressed only in practice and learned only through experience of practice' (*Ibid*, 1994: 42). Eraut differentiates practical knowledge from 'propositional knowledge' which is made up of 'discipline-based theories, derived from bodies of coherent, systematic knowledge' (*Ibid*, 1994: 43). Propositional knowledge, or 'knowing that' (Ryle, 1949) informs the practitioner's actions and can be seen to resemble theory as defined by Barker and Harris above. Practical knowledge, or 'knowing how' (*Ibid*, 1949) is inherent in the action itself and cannot be separated from it. Propositional knowledge informs practical knowledge, although only when it is 'sufficiently integrated into or connected with personal practice' (Eraut, 1994: 17). More

generalised, systematic and explicit forms of knowledge, which in this thesis are understood as theory, can therefore be seen to inform practice selectively.

Later in this chapter I return to these epistemological conceptions in order to clarify the artist educators' constructions of their knowledge. I provide a more detailed examination of practical and propositional knowledge, which assists the characterisation of the artist educators' knowledge and suggests how and why they (and the knowledge they possess) are perceived within the gallery and beyond.

4.3 Emerging themes from the interviews: the research participants' understandings of the 'artist'

During the interviews conducted with the artist educators (Liz Ellis, Michèle Fuirer, Michaela Ross, Esther Sayers and Lucy Wilson), the education curators of the community programme (Alison Cox and Joleen Keizer) and the two other education curators (Tim and David) in the education department, interviewees were initially asked to define 'the artist'. Where appropriate, they were also asked to describe their artistic practice. The responses were varied, as not all respondents are artists. Liz, Michèle, Michaela and Esther attended art school and, at the time of the interview, were engaged in their artistic practice as well as working as educators in the gallery. Michaela also has a degree in art history. Furthermore, whilst working in the gallery directly with learners, Esther was also managing 'Raw Canvas'; a Tate Modern initiative run by and for young adults (aged fifteen to twenty three), involving training, discussions and other events (www.tate.org.uk/modern/eventseducation/rawcanvas).

Detailed biographies supplied by the research participants are given in Appendix One, however I note here that Lucy did not attend art school, but completed an English literature degree at York University and subsequently trained in physical theatre. She does, however, come from a family of artists. Alison trained in art history and English literature and Joleen in history and art history. It is apparent, therefore, that not all the research participants are artists. In particular, the education

curators' backgrounds are not in art practice. When analysing the interview data I paid attention to whether this difference in life experience and education shaped the interviewees' perceptions.

During data analysis three interconnected themes emerged from the interview data which fall under the broad heading 'the construction of the artist' and which provide useful starting points for further examination. I have titled the themes 'the artist as conceptual investigator', 'the artist as empirical problem solver' and 'the artist as individual originator' for reasons that will emerge in the analysis below. The artist as conceptual investigator appears dominant within the interview data, but aspects of the other two constructions surface, despite the seeming inherent contradictions.

4.4 The artist as conceptual investigator

The construction of the artist as conceptual investigator positions the artist as exploring and articulating their ideas. Moreover the idea that artists are skilled at investigating is present in a number of the interviews. Most notably Liz Ellis describes herself accordingly:

> I mainly use photography and print, although I am starting to plan video and sound for the future, but I would say that I see my practice much less as being about what media I use, than the approaches that I take..... [it's] about methods of investigation, I suppose, the kinds of questions I find myself asking and I want to find, not so much answers to, but to show that process of investigation.

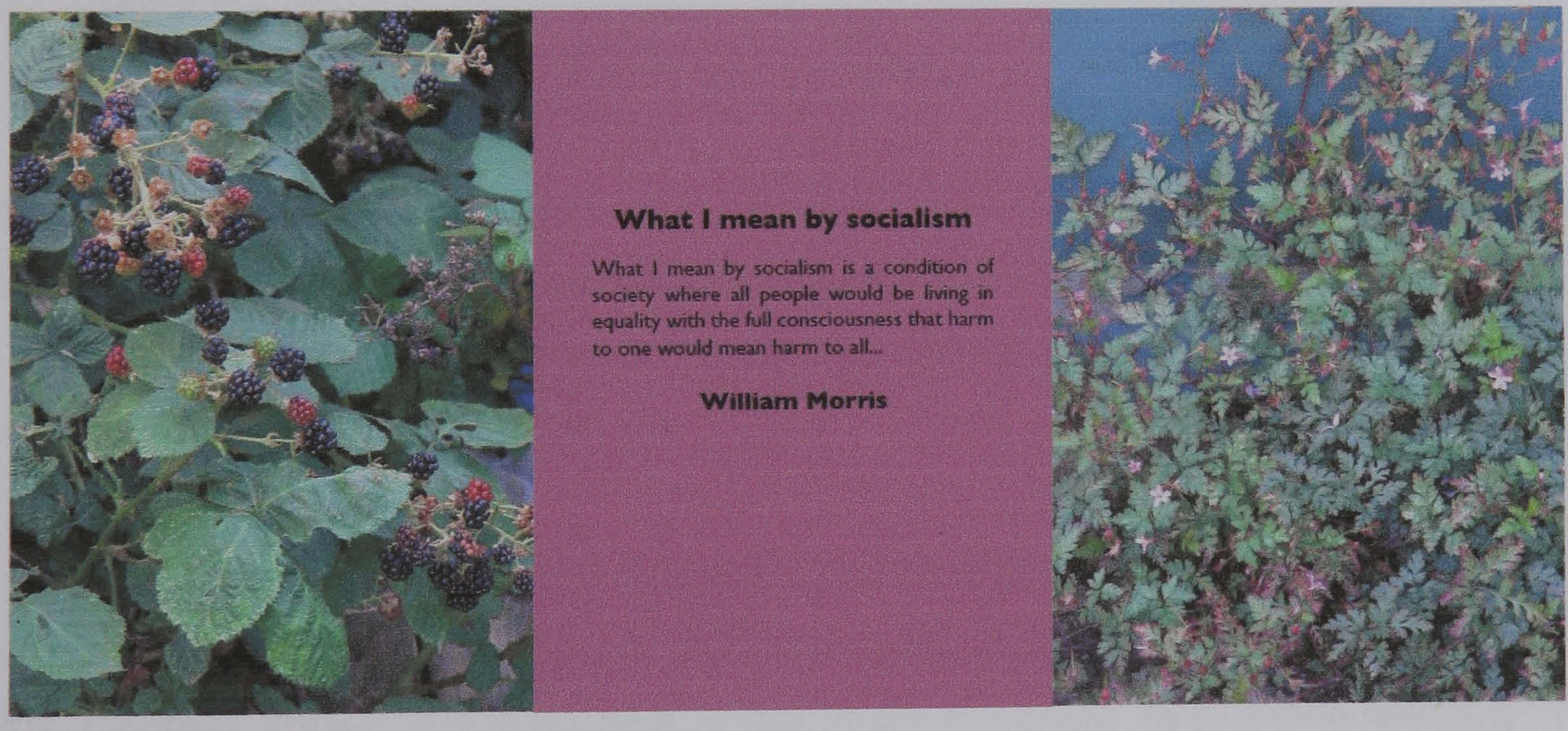
Her use of the term 'investigating' is significant, since its associations with examining closely and studying carefully (Sykes, 1979) re-establish the connections between artistic practice and research identified in chapter three. Yet this term also indicates that Liz constructs herself as an investigator of the concerns that preoccupy her, rather than a maker of images. For instance, the comment '[it's about] the kinds of questions I find myself asking,' suggests the initial stimulus for her artistic practice is intellectual; her ideas and thoughts are the starting point for her artistic journey, rather than engagement with a particular medium. This distinction between exploring ideas

visually and medium specificity is made more explicit when Liz goes on to describe a particular piece of work about her experience of living in a particular area:

> My recent piece 'Wit, Tenderness and Chance' was about the experience of living in East London and responding to what it's like to walk through certain areas – what I'd notice at different times of the year, what I notice about people living and working around, it's about investigating those things, rather than thinking I'm going to take photographs about this.

This suggests that, for Liz, photography is a tool for articulating her ideas, not an end in itself and, as the first quotation above suggests, alternative media such as video or sound could be employed equally well. Figure 4.1 below, for example, shows an image Liz produced in response to a campaign to keep the William Morris Gallery in London open.

Figure 4.1 Liz Ellis 'Inspired' (2007)



A similar sentiment is echoed by Michèle Fuirer, who also works with photography, but who made a decision not to take photography 'really seriously' because she wanted it to be a tool for devising other things:

> But I suppose why I didn't pursue photography is something to do with always wanting it to be a way into something else. Not letting it stand alone. Not wanting to commit myself to saying 'well actually I'm a photographer. These photographs are it'.

These artist educators appear to have a flexible approach to the media they use within their practice; their preoccupations extend beyond making a finished photographic product. Liz's description of 'Wit, Tenderness and Chance' also reveals that her ideas are prompted by her experiences, which she reflects on and at some point may articulate visually. It is her specific observations and interpretations that give rise to the art object. This focus on articulating subjective experience is considered below. However I note here that Alison Cox shares the perception of the artist as a conceptual investigator:

> I think of them [artists] as being quite reflective people who perhaps think about the world in particular ways and who take ideas about the world, or about how we see the world and take that idea through a process and create something at the other end.

Again emphasis is on artists' ideas and their interpretations. Artists, according to this education curator, embark on a journey of enquiry which culminates in the articulation of their ideas. There is no mention of artists having a specific relationship to a medium such as painting or sculpture.

In what they say (and do not say) Alison, Liz and Michèle echo concerns found within an understanding of art practice that has been categorised as 'conceptual' (Wood, 2002, Godfrey, 2004). It is instructive at this stage, therefore, to examine relevant ideas within conceptual art, and consider how conceptual art practice can be seen as a response to modernist practice.

4.4.1 The significance of Conceptual Art

Although conceptual art is difficult to define precisely (Wood, 2002), the idea of art having a predominantly intellectual basis has been associated with particular art practices and theories since early in the twentieth century. Most notably Marcel Duchamp's claim made in the first twenty years of the last century that the 'Unassisted Readymades' (i.e. utilitarian objects that had not originally been made as art objects) should be considered as art because an 'artist' has declared them to be so, introduced the notion that artists need not only be makers of objects, but can engage exclusively with ideas. These developments continued throughout the middle of the twentieth century culminating in the 1960s and 70s with the development of an identifiable conceptual art practice (*Ibid*, 2002).

Conceptual art, perhaps because it engages with theory overtly is a complicated and contested area of practice. However, saliently Godfrey describes conceptual art as:

> Concerned with intellectual speculation and the everyday. Conceptual art asks questions, not only of the art object; 'why is this art? Who is the artist? What is the context?' – but also of the person who looks at or reads about it: 'Who are you? What do you represent?' It draws viewers' attention to themselves. (*Ibid*, 2004: 15)

The emphasis in this formulation is on the intellectual process and modes of questioning. Conceptual art is also seen to problematise the art object and the relationship between object and artist. Evident in this and subsequent chapters, these tensions resonate with perceptions of artistic practice articulated by interviewees, but also make a link between art in the gallery and teaching and learning as perceived by artist educators.

Conceptual art practice prioritises the 'Idea' (Le Witt, 1969). Hence art objects cease to be defined by medium specificity and emphasis shifts within artistic production accordingly. Artists are not characterised according to craft skills associated with particular disciplines (hence Liz's differentiation between her taking photographs, but not seeing herself as a photographer), or according to their association with a

particular medium. Instead the medium becomes the concept and the notion of the artist as first and foremost a maker of objects is called into question.

For example, the artist Alan Kaprow declared that artists could be free from identification with a specific medium: 'Young artists of today need no longer say, 'I am a painter' or 'a poet' or 'a dancer'. They are simply 'artists' (*Ibid*, 1958: 9). Kaprow continued: 'All of life will be open to them. They will discover out of ordinary things the meaning of ordinariness. They will not try to make them extraordinary but will only state their real meaning' (*Ibid*, 1958: 9). This comment suggests that artists, by articulating their experience of 'ordinary things' through their work, imbue those experiences with specific meanings. Liz revealed above that her work emerges from her experiences; likewise Kaprow emphasises the centrality of personal experience within an artist's practice.

The construction of the artist found within a conceptual art framework continues to inform the visual arts. Wood (2003) argues that 'conceptualism' is now the dominant form of art practice and in 2003 the contemporary UK artist Richard Wentworth could state 'I think my medium is the ability to think about things. It's thoughtfulness' (Wentworth interviewed in Raney, 2003: 215). The significance of the conceptual model is also revealed in Michaela Ross' experience. Having attended art school in Italy, where the emphasis was on acquiring traditional craft skills (for example, she learnt fresco painting techniques and trained as a master printmaker) Michaela found herself unable to progress her painting because of what she identifies as a lack of conceptual input:

> I kind of ground to a halt at a certain point in my painting because I was playing around with all these materials but thinking, I have no idea really what this work is about or how I move it forward. You are not encouraged to think.... critically or to think of an idea and how you are actually going to work with it.

It appears that Michaela, despite describing herself as 'skills heavy', found the focus on materials alone without an intellectual underpinning of some kind to inform the work insufficient to sustain her practice. She needed some means of redefining herself beyond being a maker. Michaela goes on to explain that her practice moved

on once she began attending art school in the UK, as the strategies she was encouraged to adopt there helped her conceptualise:

> [The painting course] helped me to think around different kinds of approaches that I might adopt and think about, and what kinds of things I might be interested in looking at in my work.

This comment resonates with Liz's emphasis on subjectivity within her artistic practice. Michaela emphasises what she, the artist, is interested in exploring in her work and how she might articulate those ideas. She is describing a shift toward a more conceptual rather than crafts-based practice, wherein her ideas underpin the development of the work. Figure 4.2 provides an example of Michaela's more recent practice.

Figure 4.2 Michaela Ross 'Choices, Choices' (2003)

4.5 Further constructions of the artist

4.5.1 The artist as empirical problem solver:

A tangential understanding of the process of artistic investigation is articulated by Esther Sayers. Early in her interview, Esther states that, as an artist she does not necessarily have a particular body of knowledge that sets her apart from a non-artist. Instead she sees herself having 'a particular way of doing things. I think it's a way of working'. Esther gives attention to the process she is engaged in (which has affinities with Liz's understanding of her practice as an investigative journey), but specifically sees herself as an 'independent problem solver that works through things.' This suggests that Esther foregrounds the empirical aspects of her practice; she identifies issues and gains knowledge through experience, rather than through engaging with theory exclusively. (See Figure 4.3 for an example of Esther's work).

Esther elucidates how theory informs her practice in relation to her work managing the Raw Canvas strand of the education programme:

> I have more of a tendency to solve problems as I am going along, than to plan out very strategically from the start. I will plan out theoretically and conceptually where I want this aspect of the [education] programme to go and that conceptual thread is the thing that links everything together and guides it. But actually... that sort of resourcefulness that you have to have as an artist, means that I often go into things not really worrying about the practical side of things because I know I will be able to solve the problems.

The identification of a 'conceptual thread' indicates that Esther, like Liz and Michaela, engages on an intellectual level in her practice; the 'idea' is what underpins her work. Also her description of artists as 'resourceful', suggests she draws on various skills and knowledge whilst working. Esther refers to problem solving as she goes along, implying that she engages in an unpredictable, organic process. Each of these themes: the conceptual aspects of practice; artists' ingenuity and the importance of experiencing process will be developed in this and the following chapter, since they have a bearing on how artists work with artworks and learners.

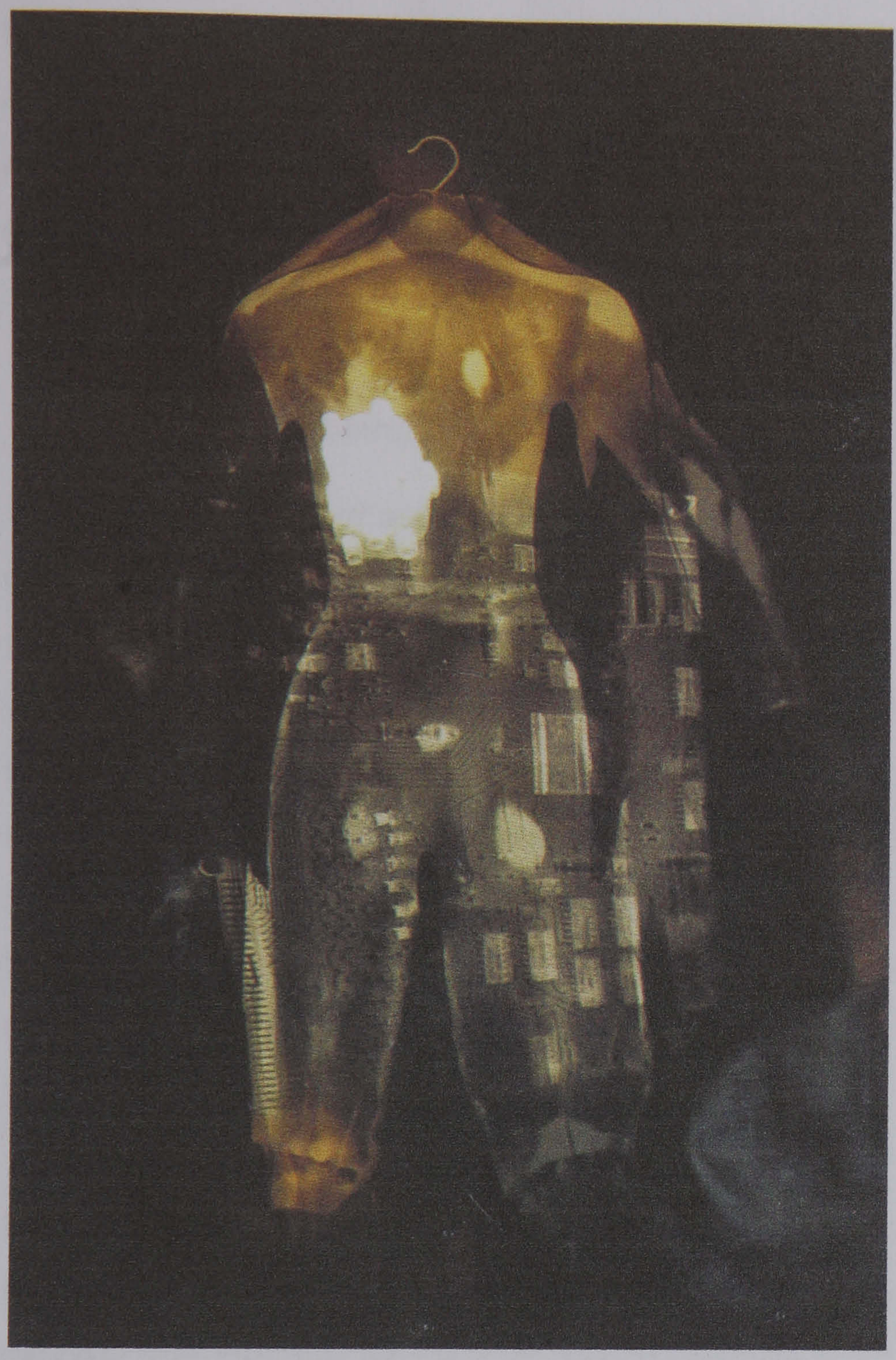


Figure 4.3 Esther Sayers 'Constructed Figure IV'(1995)

Other artist educators identify an element of problem solving in their work. Michaela refers to 'formal problems that I was kind of worrying away at', which include the use of colour. She describes an experimental process, whereby she would try out different 'strategies' (including positioning her paintings differently on the wall) in order to move the work on. In adopting this empirical approach, Michaela's (and Esther's) practice appears to draw on a model developed during the eighteenth century Enlightenment (Porter, 1990).

Enlightenment thinkers argued that reason, as brought to bear on experience and experiment, provides true knowledge about the world and 'praxis'. Porter defines praxis as 'theoretically informed practical activity' (*Ibid*, 1990: 7) and the key to human progress. The term 'praxis' is used by Michèle Fuirer:

> I'm going to use the word 'praxis', and I am never sure that it is the right word, but I try and make the praxis a thing in itself and to try and see making and visual art as a theoretical practice, not separate... that's how I see artistic practice, as being like a visual philosophy.

This understanding of artistic practice as a practical activity informed by theory chimes with the definitions of theory and practice given at the start of this chapter. By recognising the theoretical aspect of practice, Michele also appears to align herself with particular Enlightenment ideas developed during the so-called 'age of reason'. Notably there was a focus on the individual's ability to conceptualise and problem solve rationally, rather than the human capability to intuit, imagine or irrationally and spontaneously feel. However, the perceived absence of intuition, imagination and feeling in the Enlightenment model was criticised by the so-called Romantics, who in turn celebrated the irrational and emotional aspects of creativity (Harrison *et al*, 2000).

Much as these Enlightenment concepts would appear to correlate with, in particular, Esther and Michèle's perceptions, the Romantics' criticisms of the Enlightenment also indicate that this practice may not be directed by reason alone. A constant theme throughout this thesis is the intricacy of artistic practice. An area where that appears evident is in the relationship between more abstract intellectual processes and the non-rational, as represented by contested notions such as inspiration or creativity, which also seem to play a role in the making of work. Thus, although my construction of artistic practice has steered away from Romantic models of creativity, the examination of the art making process which is undertaken in the next chapter necessarily addresses whether and how artists engage with their imagination and their intellect.

4.5.2 The artist as individual originator

A mixed picture emerges in relation to the place subjectivity plays in the artistic process. In Liz and Michaela's quotations above concerning the place of personal experience in their artwork, they use the first person and hence foreground their role as instigators and creators of work. As such, it could be argued that the work originates from them and that they are 'uniquely' situated in relation to their art and meanings that accrue to those objects. However, any positioning of artists as unique creative individuals is problematic, associated as it is with the now disputed image of the artist-as-genius advanced within the modernist realisation (Harrison, 2002).

Although I recognise the criticisms of the modernist construction (see below), I see value in interrogating the 'specificity of how the visual is articulated' (Pollock interviewed in Raney, 2003: 143). This is because I consider it relevant to examine the particular relationship between artists, the art making process and art objects. I perceive that the artist educators' construction of themselves as artists is based, in part, on an understanding of themselves as creators of their work. However, this does not mean they perceive themselves as investing their work with one fixed meaning; the reality is more complex.

One of conceptual art's criticisms of the modernist construction of the artist is linked to the latter's emphasis on self-expression being the root of artistic production (Fry, 1909). As noted in chapter two, Modernism, in particular as expounded by Clement Greenberg, championed artists as uniquely inspired and original individuals who, by drawing on their own wellspring of innate gifts and engaging exclusively with their chosen medium, imbue art with particular meaning (Greenberg, 1940). This theoretical construction, which is itself informed by ideas that originated during the mid eighteenth century (Harrison *et al*, 2000), locates artists as exclusive authors of work, with the meaning of that work tied inextricably to artists' intention. Furthermore, as filtered through eighteenth and nineteenth century Romanticism (*Ibid*, 2000), art's meaning is deemed to operate essentially at a non-cognitive, emotional level. Within

a particular Romantic construction (*Ibid*, 2000) artists struggle with self-expression by engaging with their imagination and chosen medium, in order to 'create' entirely original, aesthetically autonomous works of art with a unique signature style.

Since the late 1960s in particular, this understanding of the artist as a uniquely inspired genius who operates autonomously, beyond the realm of society and theory (*Op cit*, 1940) has undergone reassessment. Roland Barthes' (1977) critique of the author, for example, has been acknowledged in chapter two. Even earlier, however, Walter Benjamin's deconstruction of authenticity, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936), provided alternative considerations of artistic production and reception. From the 1960s on, further criticisms were voiced by feminist art historians. For example, Griselda Pollock (whose ideas on the individuality of the artist are examined later in this chapter) contested the gender positioning within a model of art production where 'great' art is made by a series of male geniuses (*Ibid*, 1988). During the same period conceptual artists challenged modernism's claims to expressivity, engaging instead with theory and the intellectual process within art practice (Atkinson & Baldwin 1968, Kosuth, 1969, LeWitt, 1967). In this way artists and cultural commentators interrogated assumptions underpinning the modernist model and asserted the need to recognise the theoretical and social contexts within which artists work.

It is perhaps unsurprising that my analysis of these artist educators' perceptions of their practice reveals that they do not subscribe to this portrayal of the artist engaged in an heroic expression of the inner self. For example, central to the Romantic model of artistic creativity is an emphasis on imagination, the irrational and the authentic expression of private emotion (Harrison *et al*, 2000). Yet not one of the artist educators makes any overt reference to their imagination, their subconscious or their emotions in relation to their practice. Rather, as identified above, they tend to describe their practice in terms of conceptual investigations or problem solving processes.

Revisiting interviewees' biographies helps identify why (see Appendix One). The four artist educators who are practising artists each have a higher degree. They are all well versed in contemporary cultural theory and identify their art practice emerging from and operating within social and theoretical scenarios. Michèle Fuirer, who has an MPhil from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural studies in Birmingham, describes her practice as being informed by theory. Equally, Esther Sayers describes how she encountered theory on her Fine Art MA and was introduced to different aspects of contemporary philosophy and visual culture. Esther's own practice was informed by particular philosophical concepts:

> The philosophy ones, rather than the kind of theoretical visual culture stuff that I saw, linked with the kind of work I was trying to make which was about identity and the body. [It was] about trying to locate the individual's place in the world, so those kinds of theories really helped me to think through that.

It appears that Esther has a particular relationship to theory that is similar to Michèle's. Esther identifies her practice as informed by theory, as does Liz Ellis, who acknowledges that her art school training at St Martin's School of Art in the 1980s exposed her to post-structuralist theory. Liz is familiar with the criticisms of the modernist insular and alienated artist and her commitment to feminism and socialism 'fundamentally affects [her] approach to being an artist'. She sees her practice operating within a social and theoretical context.

These three examples provide insights into the role of theory within these artist educators' practices and suggest why none of them describe their practice or themselves in terms of the individual imagination or authentic artist's voice. They are aware of their position as artists working within cultural and theoretical debates that have effectively critiqued this understanding of the artist and art practice. Their specific education at art school, combined in some cases with individual political beliefs, has ensured that their work is theoretically and critically self-conscious. Rather than operating outside of theory, as Greenbergian Modernism advocates, these artist educators' practice emerges through theory.

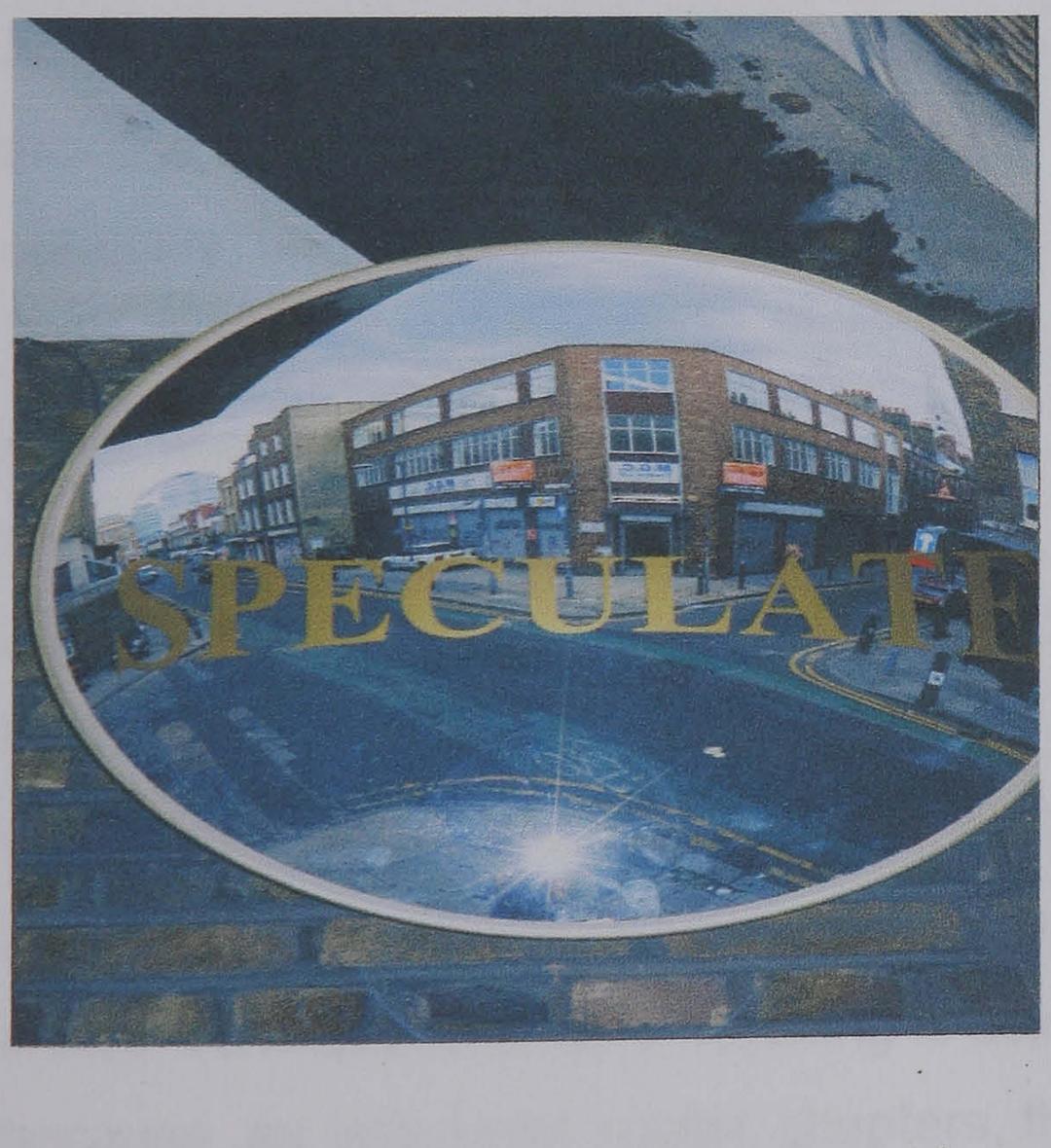
4.5.3 Revisiting subjectivity: considering meaning and authorship

However, the legacy of modernist understandings of authorship can, I believe, still be detected in these artists' perceptions of their work. In addition to Liz and Michaela's comments concerning the subjective nature of their practice, Michèle suggests that, as an artist, she recognises that a meaning, if not the only meaning, is given by her to her work. In the following exchange Michèle and I discuss her relationship as an artist with her audience, in other words those who make meaning from her work. The extract is long, but is included as it reveals the depth of Michèle's knowledge, but also how her thinking shifts as she talks:

> **Michèle (M)**: I'm not sure I ever thought about audience much and I still don't.
> **Emily (E)**: It's interesting, given what you do [as an artist educator]!
> **M**: Yes…but in terms of my own practice I find it very difficult to think about audience.
> **E**: In the sense that you don't think about how people are going to read this work?
> **M**: Gosh, do I? I was going to say that I don't particularly build that into how I make a piece of work, but I suppose I do. I mean when I make videos I am thinking about audience in terms of, the relationship between me and the spectator, through the medium. But … I go back to thinking about 'this is my statement, this is my artwork and if they can't understand it, stuff 'em!'
> **E**: This is so interesting, because in some ways you are back being 'the artist'. It's like these are my intentions and I'm going to put it out there and after that it's up to you.
> **M**: Well I do go a bit further than that. This is retracting a bit, but there is a thing in my mind about how is this going to be read and the mirrors thing I did for 'Curio'…. (see figure 4.4 below) There was my agenda within that about references and.. still life and Vanitas and there was another level where I was thinking I want people to get this; I want people to understand things about the look, the mirror thing and the metaphors for a camera or screen. And I was really anxious that they wouldn't get it… there was a sense when I was making the work that I hope people can peel away some of these notions… But I think it's a very complex process of thinking about audience and how you integrate it into your product and I do think there are some times when I reserve the prerogative, it sounds pompous, to make my work, as I make it, as the artist and what will follow, will follow. But on other occasions it will be much more contingent to consider audience. For me it is a shifting thing and then on the other side if I do that I am an artist educator.

This exchange raises a number of issues. Michèle's reference to 'the look', for example, indicate her familiarity with concepts that undermine the artist's authority and her concern that viewers 'get' the references she is making indicate her awareness that the meaning she intends for the work may not be the one viewers construct. Yet her comments also reveal that a meaning is provided by her, the artist; the artwork is her statement. She is able to see both 'sides' (as maker and interpreter of work), although her last comment that it is as an artist educator, rather than as an artist, that she foregrounds the position of the viewer, suggests that her 'artist' self is primarily concerned with articulating her ideas. Michèle's comments illuminate how an artist locates meaning in their work and the potential gaps between that and the interpretive process undertaken by viewers. I therefore return to her ideas in subsequent chapters when considering the artistic process in detail (chapter five) and meaning making in the gallery (chapters seven and eight).

Figure 4.4 Michèle Fuirer 'Speculate' (one of five mirrors installed in Hanbury Street, East London for 'Curio' – an exhibition curated by Alana Jelinek) (2003)



These three artist educators appear to see that part of their practice, as artists, involves attempting to communicate their specific ideas and experiences, whilst remaining aware of the theoretical and art historical significance of taking this position. They are in some ways pragmatic; aware of where theory may locate them,

but continuing to ask questions and seek answers within the specifics of their practice.

The need to revisit the specific relationship between artists, artistic practice and meaning in artworks (what was earlier referred to here as 'individuality') is articulated by Griselda Pollock (Pollock interviewed in Raney, 2003). Pollock argues that it is relevant now to consider an artwork 'in its singularity, as somebody's particular project' (*Ibid*, 2003: 147). She goes on to say that:

> Art produces something that has not been produced before, which is creative in the sense that it is an inventive shifting of meanings in the collective space called culture, that comes out of something that is singular, located, motivated in a particular history (*Ibid*, 2003: 149).

Pollock thereby suggests that, although we can no longer support the view of artists as uniquely inspired creators, the artist working within a particular social and historical moment has a singular part to play in creating a work and affecting the meanings accruing to it. Pollock also describes the art process as 'creative', yet she distances it from the Romantic construction of creativity as described above. The model of art process examined in the following chapter is framed within a similar understanding of creativity, and the term itself is interrogated in greater detail there.

Acknowledgement of the role of the artist and the art making process in developing an artwork's varied meanings is echoed by the art historian Charles Harrison in his definition of art objects as specific things that are created by particular individuals. Harrison, like Pollock, acknowledges the specificity of art practice, which is why his quotation appears in chapter one in relation to how I construct artworks when working as an artist educator in the gallery. Supported by Harrison and Pollock's arguments, artists' contribution to art's meaning is acknowledged in this thesis. This is not least because, as examined in later chapters, the research participants appear to pay particular attention to processes of artistic decision-making that culminate in an artwork when working with learners in the gallery.

This section has begun constructing 'the artist' as understood by the interviewees. I have developed the model of the 'conceptual investigator', which reflects the shared construction of art making described by the interviewees who are practising artists. Practice, as Michèle, Esther, Michaela and Liz see it, involves engagement in a conceptual and productive process wherein they explore and articulate their ideas using a range of media. In this respect their activities can be understood as a form of making meaning. I have noted that Michèle, Esther and Liz in particular identify their practice as informed by theory, but not defined exclusively by it. Further insights into the relationship between practice and theory are gained through the following interrogation of artistic epistemology.

4.6 Examining what constitutes artistic knowledge

Recognising the active processes artists are engaged in (what artists do and how they do it) is central to the conceptual investigator construction. This is because all these artist educators do not circumscribe themselves or their practice in relation to a particular medium, a body of subject specific knowledge or set of craft skills. They are not artists because they are painters, or know about art history or because they are proficient at welding, for example. Instead they construct themselves according to what they do; the questions they ask; the approaches they take; the processes they are engaged in.

This section examines different perceptions of artists' knowledge and skills. This exposition illuminates how these artists function (and are seen to function by others) as 'artists', but also as gallery educators. In particular I am interested in differences between academic and other more practical forms of knowing and how artistic epistemology corresponds with these two categorizations. Identifying whether a hierarchy of knowledge exists which positions 'objective' academic or theoretical knowledge above more overtly 'subjective' experiential or practical forms of knowing is also important. The presence of such a hierarchy might help to explain how artist educators are delineated within Tate Modern education.

Emerging from the interviews is the understanding of artistic practice as an ongoing investigative or problem solving process; the conceptual investigation. But what is it that artists 'know' that enables them to embark on this process with confidence? When asked what knowledge she possesses as an artist, Michaela states 'I think it's knowledge of strategies', which suggests that she knows an approach to working. This familiarity with and understanding of the art making process is referred to by Griselda Pollock as 'aesthetic intelligence.. [which is] about judgements and ...a form of intelligence that can know what to do when making, which is different from some kind of notion of inspiration welling up' [Pollock interviewed in Raney, 2003: 149). Aesthetic intelligence is thus differentiated from non-cognitive art making. Here rational decision making underpins the artistic process; aesthetic intelligence enables artists to 'know what to do,' rather than 'inspiring' them.

In its recognition of inherent functionality, aesthetic intelligence chimes with the concept of 'practical knowledge' (Eraut, 1994) referred to earlier in this chapter and I return to Eraut's ideas now to examine further the artists' constructions of their knowledge.

4.6.1 Locating the artist as a professional practitioner and analysing artistic knowledge

The concept of 'practical knowledge' is developed during an examination of professionalism and professional knowledge (how is it acquired and differentiated from non-professional's expertise). In Eraut's text the question 'what constitutes a profession?' is acknowledged to be convoluted, but is addressed thus: 'the problem to which the concept of a profession is said to provide an answer is that of the social control of expertise' (*Ibid*, 1994: 2). Within this construction it is specialist knowledge, or more precisely expertise (which encompasses both skills and knowledge) which differentiates the professional practitioner. Accordingly, I have positioned the artist as a practitioner in this thesis. In other words, the artist in generic terms is recognised here as having specific skills and knowledge. This expertise, as argued in later

chapters in relation to the case study artists, informs artistic practice, but also how these practitioners work with learners.

Recognising that artists have specific expertise necessitates an examination of the character and constitution of such knowledge and skills. Michaela has indicated above that she has a form of tactical knowledge that enables her to negotiate a process of investigation. Her knowledge is intrinsically linked to what she does and how she does it. In this respect her expertise is similar to 'practical knowledge', since Eraut emphasises that practical knowledge is experiential; it is learned through practice. Other interviewees also connect artists' knowledge to their practical activities. For instance, Michèle implies that her knowledge is gained through experience when she says '[it] is very practical; it's very practice based'. Tim, the education curator also acknowledges that '[Artists] have that kind of knowledge of the practice and the practical process'. This suggests that Michèle and Tim see artists' expertise deriving from active engagement in the artistic process.

As well as connecting their knowledge closely to their practice, particular interviewees have a specific relationship to theoretical or 'propositional knowledge' (*Ibid*, 1994). According to Eraut, the professional draws on propositional knowledge if and when it is integrated with practice. A similar relationship is found in those interviews where the artist's extensive theoretical knowledge is apparent. Yet typically these artists describe using such knowledge to develop their practice. Michaela makes this point when she contrasts the approaches she took as an art historian with how she works as an artist:

> I did art history quite traditionally .... It's a very particular discipline... it was about the canon and ... [there] is that sense of there being a fixed way of doing things or working within a particular discipline and with certain kinds of protocols and methodologies that you take on as an art historian..... In many ways I think it's antithetical to what you do as an artist which.... is more I need this idea or I need this formal solution.... I suppose I use theory.

Seemingly there exists a difference, according to Michaela, between working within an academic discipline such as art history and working as an artist, acquiring and

developing propositional knowledge as and when it becomes relevant or useful for the development of your artistic practice.

The difference between academics and professionals has been described as partly pragmatic (Eraut, 1994). Academics essentially acquire knowledge, possession of which confers status and is demonstrated through erudition; whereas professionals are aiming for action and operate in a 'what ought to be done' environment (*Ibid*, 1994: 52). This leads the latter group to adapt and develop knowledge according to the circumstances in which they find themselves, since it is effective action that confers status, not learning as such. I see artists resembling professionals more closely than academics in their approach to knowledge, since artists seek effective action, in the form of the most successful realisation of their ideas and development of their artistic practice, rather than knowledge for knowledge's sake.

In attempting to further clarify artistic epistemology, I am also drawn to the distinction between 'technical knowledge' (*Ibid*, 1994) which is capable of written codification and practical knowledge, which in some cases (for example the 'feel' of a piece of sculpture) (*Ibid*, 1994: 42) resists systematic and explicit organisation. By making this distinction, the implicit nature of much practical knowledge, which is not easily written or even verbally classified, is reiterated. But two key issues emerge; how is such practical knowledge acquired through experience and how is it made explicit? One insight into these issues is given by Lucy Wilson, when she describes how the artists in her family communicate:

> It's quite important to understand this... I don't think that 'artistic' doesn't mean articulate and reading artist's books [but] I have become more and more aware that being an artist you think and communicate in a slightly different way than a literate or literary people.... Well I would never say my father would communicate about his artwork through words. It was just done through his practice and I think artists do that.... I think when you think 'oh you come from a family all full of artists' that we are sitting around the kitchen table discussing Matisse all day; far, far from it. You don't talk about it, funnily enough, you don't talk; you do.

Knowledge of the kind artists have, according to Lucy, is not only acquired through engaging in practice (that is through experience) but is also communicated that way. This suggests that artistic knowledge is made explicit through practice and serves primarily to inform the further development of such practice. If this is so, it implies that artists' knowledge is wholly personal and potentially inaccessible to others, which has implications for how artists function (and are perceived to function by others) in teaching and learning scenarios. I interrogate the extent to which the interview data and other literature support this construction of artistic epistemology in chapters six and seven.

Practical knowledge is understood to be experiential, but also complex, unpredictable, contextualized and difficult to generalise from (Eraut, 1994, Scott *et al,* 2004, Schon, 1982). This implies that professionals and artists may face the potential difficulty of possessing knowledge that does not easily translate into general propositions and is thus considered inferior. Scott *et al's* categorisation of different types of knowledge helps clarify this hierarchy further and throws light on how different forms of knowledge are evaluated.

In a text examining professional doctorates, Scott *et al* address how the student-practitioner is constructed in the workplace and in academic cultures. They indicate that there can be difficulties in equating academic and practitioner knowledge and in order to clarify the differences between the two, the authors explore different models of knowledge. For instance they identify 'disciplinary knowledge' as the theoretical and methodological frameworks which characterise a particular discipline (which I understand to equate to Eraut's propositional knowledge), and serve to delineate, for example, an art historian from a non-art historian, a theorist from a non-theorist. In a disciplinary knowledge model, 'objective' and 'authoritative' knowledge dominates and practitioner or practical knowledge is seen as inferior, since it is not associated with ideas of truth, objectivity or epistemological authority.

In slight contrast, the same writers identify 'dispositional and trans-disciplinary knowledge' as 'non-predictable, non-deterministic, situation specific and contextualized (*Ibid*, 2004: 48). In this model, what they refer to as 'practitioner knowledge,' emerges through practice in specific, but dynamic contexts. As such, it involves a continuous cycle of 'deliberation and action that cannot be transformed in the process into generalisable accounts' (*Ibid*, 2004: 48). Thus practitioner knowledge is experiential and in continuous development. This appears to correspond with Eraut's delineation of 'practical knowledge' and Lucy's understanding of her father's and other artists' relationship to knowledge. Scott *et al* also see the rationale for acquiring practitioner knowledge as informing the development of an individual's practice and to assist individual understanding of given situations. Therefore practitioner knowledge may not be applicable in broader contexts and is potentially more 'limited' (*Ibid*, 2004:50).

However, if practitioner knowledge is only relevant to the individual who acquires it, how and why should it be shared with others? This question was touched on in chapter three in the broader discussion on research and art practice and is returned to in later chapters' examination of pedagogy in the gallery, since it has implications for artists' effectiveness as educators. Moreover the extent to which practical knowledge is wholly implicit warrants further analysis, since arguably in the artistic context knowledge is made explicit through a variety of means. For instance, I examine the 'imaginative outcome' (Prentice, 2000), or output, of the artistic process in terms of embodying meaning and/or knowledge in the following chapter. Schon's (1982) concept of knowledge revealed through intelligent action (found in his description of 'knowing-in-action') is also relevant. Here it is the skilful execution of a performance (be it riding a bicycle or, as is more likely here, creating an image) that makes practitioner knowledge explicit.

Knowledge revealed through action chimes with Pollock's (2003) concept of aesthetic intelligence, since both address forms of knowing made explicit through doing or making. However, Schon provides a further insight into what enables knowing-in-

action by drawing on the notion of 'tacit intelligence', which describes that which we know, but do not articulate (Polyani, 1967). Tacit intelligence allows a practitioner to recognise, judge and respond to a scenario spontaneously without requiring conscious thought. It is tacit intelligence, arguably, which underpins the decision making process that Pollock sees as intrinsic to aesthetic intelligence.

Two further characteristics of knowing-in-action are noteworthy. First the practitioner may be unaware of how they learnt to do the action or make the judgment, which suggests that it is not only the knowledge that remains unspoken, but also the learning process. If so, this has implications for pedagogy in the gallery and aspects of meta- learning which are examined in chapter nine. Second it is often difficult to articulate the 'knowing' that is revealed by the action (Schon, 1982). Both these points surface in the following comment from Michèle, where she describes her sense of possessing knowledge, but not necessarily being conscious of it:

> Well I suppose it's conscious and unconscious. I am conscious that I have carried this body of knowledge. It does feel like that, physically it does, that there is something inside me that I've carried along.... I wouldn't know what to call it, other than back tracking like this and identifying it with particular moments, with particular set of texts or set of tutors, teachers, practitioners... And I am vaguely conscious of it sometimes when I am stood there, but I can't quite put my finger on it because it has shifted, it's shifted with my own practice.

In saying this Michèle appears to recognize the fluidity of her knowledge and its implicitness. Her emphasis on 'carrying' her knowledge around, suggests that the knowledge is part of her; it is truly embodied. Associated with this, her comment that 'she wouldn't know what to call it' indicates that, although she is aware that she has it, her knowledge (and also her awareness of how she acquired it) is largely tacit. She does not have to declare it (or is, perhaps, unused to doing so) in order for it to exist.

4.6.2 Considering the relevance of 'craft' knowledge

The concept of tacit knowledge is central to Dormer's (1994) exploration of 'craft' knowledge. Dormer's argument is useful here, since he looks specifically at tacit

knowledge in relation to fine art, however there are aspects of his argument that I question, particularly as they appear to rest upon assumptions regarding artistic practice. Dormer's central contention is that within fine art, tacit knowledge only relates to practical craft, since knowledge in conceptual art practice is capable of verbalisation:

> With tacit knowledge in the conceptual arts I argue that complete descriptions of the core of such knowledge are, in principle, recoverable by language because language is the medium in which the craft of conceptual thinking resides. The thinking in the crafts of oil painting, pottery, modeling, lace making and so forth resides not in language, but in the physical processes involving the physical handling of the medium. (*Ibid*, 1994: 24)

He suggests that unlike craft knowledge conceptual artists' knowledge has its foundation in language and can therefore be made explicit through language. This would seem to contradict what the artists interviewed for this thesis (and which I have identified as conceptual in their approach) have stated. In particular the artists' acknowledgement of the implicit quality of their knowledge and the extent to which it is revealed through their practice suggests elements of it are not recoverable through words.

Further interrogation of Dormer's ideas reveal he is concerned with 'art in which handicraft (usually that of the artist or studio craftsperson) is the crucial, the only link between intention and expression' (*Ibid*, 1994. p.6). In other words Dormer associates artistic practice with self-expression and thus can be seen to have adopted what I identified as a modernist/Romantic view of the artist. As described earlier, the modernist construction of artists as inspired individuals who express their original ideas, has been critiqued, although the principle of the artist as maker of their work continues to inform the practice of the artists in this thesis. For this reason it is useful to look more closely at Dormer's text.

Returning to the quality of knowledge in practical art making, Dormer asserts that it is tacit or craft knowledge that enables the artist to express their ideas. Thus for the painter, for example, it is tacit knowledge of handling paint amongst other things that

allow him (Dormer uses examples of male artists) to express himself competently. Thinking for the artist is inextricably linked to making and the meaning of a work of art is 'a result of craft knowledge' (*Ibid*, 1994: 26). Conceptual artists, in contrast, are concerned with representing ideas, not expressing them. Dormer asserts that within conceptual practice there is no connection between medium and message, since 'almost any object or part of an object can be put into an assemblage and be described as representing anything that the assembler cares to say it represents' (*Ibid*, 1994: 27). Since conceptual artists are no longer expressing themselves through their chosen medium, their craft knowledge, which would previously have been evident through their making activities, ceases to play a part in the artistic process.

My main criticism of Dormer's argument is his polarisation of artists as either expressing or representing ideas, which does not correlate with the research participants' varied perceptions of their artistic practices. For instance, his construction of the conceptual artist does not appear to recognise decision making as acknowledged by Pollock (2003), which enables artists to realise their ideas, or the tacit knowledge that informs those judgments. These artists may not describe their practice in terms of an engagement in craft activities such as sculpture or printmaking, but throughout the process of bringing their work to fruition, they draw on their implicit knowledge of how best to articulate their ideas.

The conceptual artist, according to Dormer functions as a rational thinker; there is no place for the non-rational in his construction. Yet as emerges in the following chapter, art making as considered here centres on the articulation (in preference to expression) of artists' ideas and involves elements of intellectual and more spontaneous non-cognitive processes. Hence my construction of the artist as conceptual investigator acknowledges that tacit knowledge cannot be limited to craft knowledge in the fine arts, since it also plays a key role in a more ideas-based artistic process.

4.7 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has focused on the first research question and addressed the research participants' perceptions of what it means to be an artist. Drawing on the interview data, and referencing specific theoretical constructions, I have outlined the concept of the artist as conceptual investigator to draw attention to the intellectual and active aspects of these artists' practice. In later chapters this process will be allied to a constructive process of making meaning. The chapter has also identified how particular interviewees recognise artists as having a specific part to play in relation to the creation of artworks. This has implications for how such works are interpreted subsequently.

Artistic epistemology has also come under scrutiny. Contextualised within an examination of concepts of practitioner knowledge, the evidence indicates that these artists' knowledge is experiential and context specific. It is also to an extent embodied and tacit, but revealed through action. Arguably, however, artists' knowledge is also manifest in the outcomes of their actions; artworks. Artists' expertise allows them to negotiate the art making process. As with professionals, these artists draw on theoretical knowledge as and when it assists the effective execution of their practice, which in this context equates to the successful articulation of their ideas.

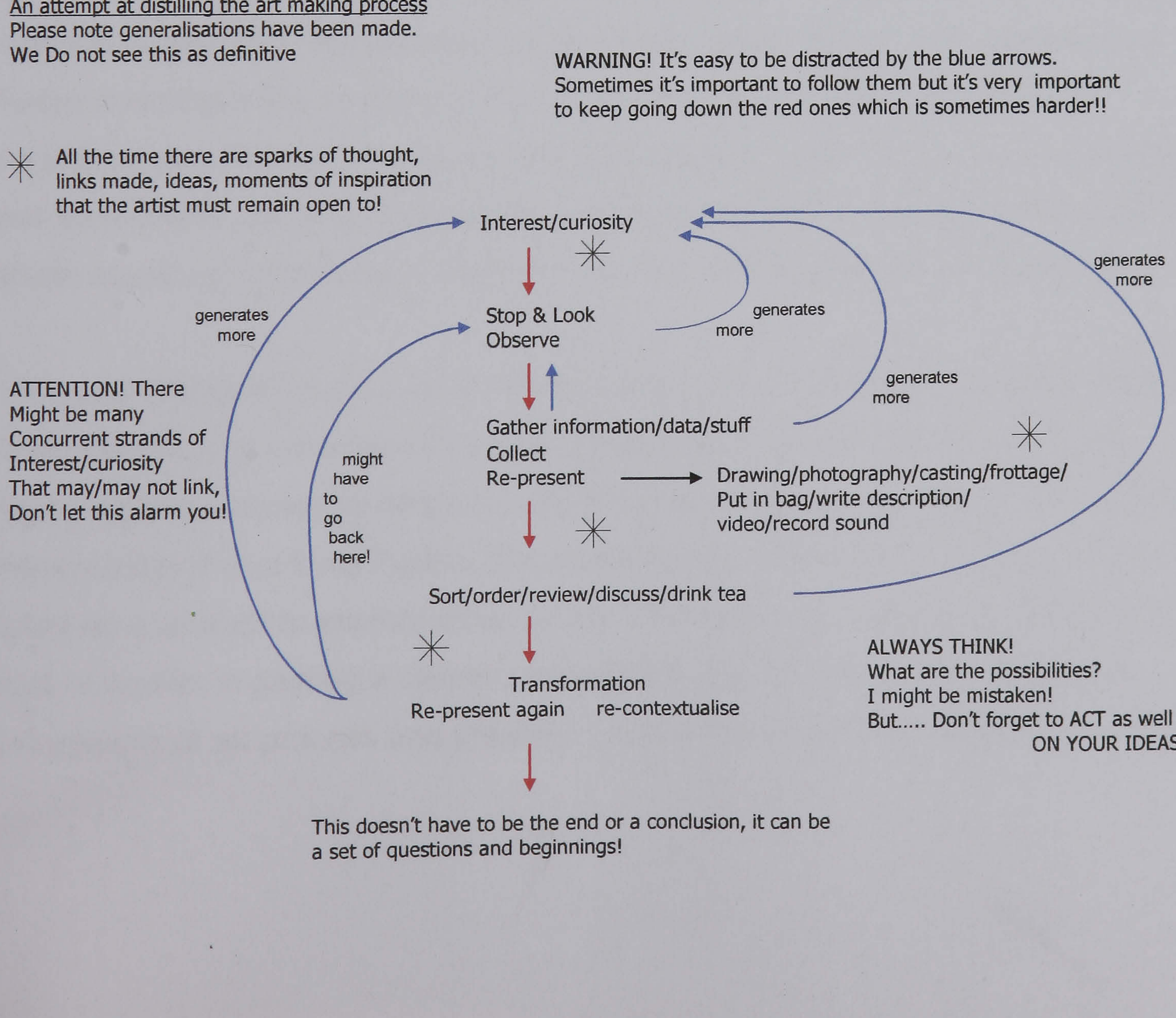
Through this examination a clearer picture of artists' skills and knowledge has emerged. In the following chapter I examine a model of the art making process to gain greater understanding of the particular skills which an 'expert' artist may possess. Insights gained from these interrogations of artistic knowledge and art practice inform the investigation of the second research question (how do the artist educators' perceive they function as educators in the gallery?) which is undertaken in chapters seven and eight.

5.1 Examining art practice: analysing a model of the art making process and identifying artists' skills

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I consider the process of artistic investigation in more depth by examining a model of art practice titled the 'Art Making Model' (figure 5.1). This model was constructed by the artists Rebecca Binch and Lucy Pedlar in 2005 who at that stage were working as artist educators on 'enquire' (www.enquire.org), a research programme examining learning within gallery education practice. I draw on this model primarily to gain greater understanding of artists' particular skills. However this analysis also provides insights into the ways artists can approach the making of meaning through the creation of their art work. Constructing art practice as a meaning making process allows commonalities to be established with learning and teaching and potential connections made between the research participants' art making and pedagogic work.

Figure 5.1 The Art Making Model



There is a recognised lack of research into artistic process (Refsum, 2002, Sullivan, 2005) and a need to develop theory related to 'that which happens before art is produced, that is the processes that lead to the finished objects of art' (*Ibid*, 2002:6). The examination of the Art Making model enables me to interrogate specific aspects of the art process. Furthermore, the examination of art making illuminates and expands on the research participants' perceptions of the conceptual and practical activities artists undertake. Relating directly to my first research question ('how do selected artist educators understand themselves to be 'artists', specifically in terms of their knowledge, skills and experiences'), here I interrogate the stages artists go through and the particular activities they engage in as they develop their initial ideas with reference to the interview data. In subsequent chapters I examine how the activities identified in the Art Making Model, most notably looking, questioning, critically reflecting and transforming emerge in the Art into Life sessions at Tate Modern.

5.2 The value of the Art Making Model

My reasons for using the Art Making Model as a basis for further analysis stem partly from the origins and characteristics of the model itself. Rebecca Binch and Lucy Pedlar developed the model to clarify how their artistic practice informs their pedagogic activities with young people in the gallery and schools. Second the model was intended to assist young people's understanding of the artistic process (as these artists see it) and encourage them to construct their own models of art practice.

Thus one attraction of the model is that it emerges from a similar context to this thesis (artists working as educators in a gallery) and aims to address relevant issues regarding the relationship between artistic and pedagogic processes. As used by Rebecca Binch and Lucy Pedlar, the model had an explanatory function, but also acted as a catalyst to explore other ideas. The model performs a similar function here; it assists in gaining a clearer understanding of the research participants' perceptions of art process and provides a basis for considering whether connections

can be established between teaching and learning in the gallery and the research process itself. Consequently issues emerging in this chapter connect with themes examined in chapters seven and eight (pedagogy in the gallery) and draw on the exposition of the relationship between research and art practice in chapter three. I have discussed the model with Rebecca Binch and have her and Lucy Pedlar's permission to draw on the model, which is unpublished.

The model is also useful because it examines the artistic process holistically; it is made up of stages that practitioners go through as they build their knowledge and understanding and articulate their ideas. The model indicates how specific elements of the artistic process inform and emerge from each other, as there is a progression starting with 'Interest/curiosity', moving through to 'Transformation/re-contextualise'. Yet the model also suggests plurality and multiplicity, since arrows move between the different stages and the additional notes draw attention to the uncertainty of the undertaking. The model does not identify final outcomes, but recognises that 'outputs' such as drawings, videos or objects represent the periodic 'transformation' of an artist's original thoughts, interests and knowledge. In turn, these outputs generate new ideas and knowledge and stimulate the ongoing process. Thus the model is presented as essentially circular, with numerous links between, and leading from, different stages. Figure 5.1 shows a graphic representation of the model however a copy of the original hand-drawn version is given in Appendix Four which gives a clearer indication of the balance between spontaneity and coherence.

This recognition of the convoluted character of the artistic process resonates with my experience of art making and also, I consider, with the research participants' perceptions. It is significant that the model was constructed by artists, as researchers have noted the absence of their contributions in debates around creativity and the 'creative process' (Bannerman, 2004) or in the study of the 'processes, products, proclivities and contexts' (Sullivan, 2005: 84) of art making. The model thus provides a rare insight into how artists conceive their process from 'start' to 'finish'. It

considers what (but also how) artists make and thereby enhances the detailed examination of art practice in this thesis.

Although unusual, the Art Making Model is not unique. Sulllivan (2005), in his consideration of how art practice can be understood as a form of research, provides a series of varied models. Relevant to this thesis is his analysis of studio practice as a process of intellectual and imaginative inquiry that yields new knowledge and understanding. Refsum's (2002) six stage model that addresses knowledge activation within artistic practice from 'personal intention' through to 'the finished work of art' (*Ibid*, 2002: 6) also compliments the Art Making Model and informs the analysis in this chapter. Likewise expositions of aspects of artistic process such as the role of intuition (Pollock interviewed in Raney, 2003), critical reflection (Prentice, 1995, Shahn, 1957) and the transformation or articulation of knowledge (Lachapelle *et al*, 2003, Wentworth interviewed in Raney, 2003) are drawn on to contextualise and critique the Art Making Model.

This contextualisation and critique is necessary as the Art Making Model presents a selective picture of art practice. Most noticeably the model constructs artists as context-free, thereby positioning art making as a process divorced from social, political or educational concerns. Whereas Sullivan (2005) recognises that artists working in varied situations (including digital environments) disrupt boundaries between disciplines and intersect with different experiences, the Art Making model addresses the individual artist's specific creative trajectory. Similarly artists working within the traditions of community or negotiated arts seek to acknowledge the impact of socio-political conditions on their process and outcomes (as indeed, do the artist educators Michèle Fuirer and Liz Ellis). However, Rebecca Binch and Lucy Pedlar do not propose a purpose for the artistic process beyond the articulation of an artist's individual ideas. By doing this the model appears to exclude more collaborative or radical forms of art making, or those with an overt political or educational agenda, such as that advocated by Walter Benjamin (1934) (see chapter two) and taken up within community arts.

Given that the Art Making Model was developed by artists working as educators, this construction of art practice suggests that Binch and Pedlar conceive their art practice as separate from their pedagogic work. In particular the model does not foreground meaning generated through dialogue with others, which is a central aspect of pedagogy in the gallery. In other words, it appears they see their work with learners not as a form of collaborative or negotiated art practice, but a discrete activity which informs their educational practice. In this way they differ from a contemporary artist such as Lottie Child, whose art practice has been described as working 'between reflective and interactive domains, relying on dialogue in order for work to be realised' (Sinker, 2007: 119).

Examining whether the artist educators at Tate Modern recognise a separate, yet complimentary relationship between art practice and pedagogy contributes to the investigation of this thesis' original research questions. What follows therefore is an examination of aspects of the Art Making Model, in order to gain broader critical perspectives and to identify connections and divergences between artistic practice and pedagogy in the gallery.

5.3 Art practice as enquiry and the place of inspiration

In the Art Making Model the starting point for the artistic process of investigation is described as 'interest/curiosity'. The use of these terms rather than, for example, 'inspiration' at this point, emphasises stimulation by, and engagement with, outward phenomena. In contrast, 'inspiration' has been defined as 'thought, etc. that is inspired' (Sykes, 1979: 559), which suggests an internal and emerging process, although the phrase 'that is inspired' raises the question 'by what?' The nineteenth century Romantics (as critiqued in chapter three) considered that artists engaged with the world, but drew their inspiration from their emotions and subconscious; their innate genius. But, whilst 'curiosity' features within Enlightenment thinking, this model appears to distance itself from the Romantic understanding of the uniquely 'inspired'

imagination as the root of artistic creation. Instead at this first stage activity and enquiry are foregrounded.

This focus on enquiry chimes with themes already addressed in this thesis. The concurrence between art practice and research alluded to in chapter three, acknowledges in broad terms that both are concerned with questioning and discovering the new. Likewise curiosity and interest tie in with concepts explored in chapter four; notably that conceptual artists engage with ideas and experiences which stimulate their art practice. In this model artists are not constructed as passive conduits for their unmediated 'creative' outpourings. However, found in the model, the interview data and particular literature is the recognition that art making involves investigation, analysis and rational consideration, but also inspiration, intuition and the irrational. Thus, although difficult to define, the contribution of inspiration and intuition to a 'creative' process needs acknowledgement.

5.3.1 Interrogating creativity and inspiration

Differing views exist regarding what constitutes creativity, as well as who is creative and how creativity is manifested. In a recent literature review, Banaji *et al* (2006) identify a series of 'rhetorics', or forms of discourse, of creativity found in academic, research, policy and practice contexts. The first of these – the concept of creativity as ascribed to the lone artistic genius – has already been acknowledged and critiqued. Others include creativity as constructed within more democratic forms of cultural participation, such as found within the community arts practices described in chapter two. These contrasting views inform my construction of artists and help explicate whether creativity is the preserve of few or many. They are also valuable frameworks for interrogating forms of creative and pedagogic practice in the gallery within the wider context of creative teaching and learning (Craft, 2005).

Further consideration of inspiration is required, as although the Romantic imagination is not dominant in the model, inspiration remains a feature of the art process for the

creators of the model and other authors. A note within the Art Making Model declares: 'All the time there are sparks of thought, links made, ideas, moments of inspiration that the artist must remain open to' (see figure 5.1). This indicates that the ongoing artistic process involves the spontaneous, unconscious and poetic. Likewise, Griselda Pollock argues that the balance between 'poetic play' and formal decision making is vital to the artistic process (Pollock interviewed in Raney, 2003), whilst the artist Sol LeWitt recognises that 'Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists; there are limits to what logic alone can accomplish in terms of artistic development' (*Ibid*, 1969: 837). The artistic process thus constructed combines rationality with playful and spontaneous moments and by highlighting the unexpected and imaginative Pollock and LeWitt suggest open-mindedness and freedom to explore. I sense this playfulness throughout the model and consider in later chapters how it translates into specific forms of engagement with learners in the gallery.

A reconsideration of the value of play in developing and sustaining creativity is advocated by Prentice (2000(a)) in his examination of creativity and early childhood education. Relevant here are his criteria for creativity (including inventiveness, flexibility, imagination, risk taking and a tolerance of ambiguity) and analysis of the conditions conducive for its development in education. He provides a framework for understanding the Art Making Model as creative, as his identified criteria (which are examined further below) correspond with characteristics evident throughout the process. His ideas also chime with modes of creative learning advocated within Tate Modern. Prentice identifies creative learners as active meaning makers and argues that the 'co-existence of alternatives' and 'the value of individual interpretation' (*Ibid,* 2000(a): 155) are central to creative learning. These concepts are evident in the learner-centred, activity based methodology that aims to encourage plural interpretations and which underpins Tate Modern's education programmes (Charman *et al*, 2006).

Whilst recognising these moments of inspiration acknowledged in the model and by Pollock, Prentice and LeWitt, I see them as taking place within the framework of an

ongoing and active artistic practice. Boden (1990) appears to support this, since she sees creative beginnings as 'playing around' within given constraints; creativity involves testing ideas, pushing boundaries and making links between existing and new ideas. Similarly Cropley (2001) positions moments of 'sudden illumination' (*Ibid*, 2001:19), as requiring preparation and a degree of familiarity with the field. Inspiration and more unpremeditated engagement are integral to the artistic process, but develop within and build on existing knowledge and ideas.

The interview data indicates that the research participants who are artists describe the origins of their practice in similar terms to the model. Rather than alluding to inspiration welling up, artist educators including Liz describe their work as being 'about' something (in her case, 'about the experience of living in East London' (my emphasis)). Michèle states that '[the work] was about references and things to do with still life and vanitas.' (Vanitas refers to a form of northern European sixteenth and seventeenth century still life painting that concerned itself with the transience of life through the representation of objects such as skulls and decaying fruit). Likewise Esther refers to 'work that I was trying to make which was about identity and the body.' Each statement reveals the artists' interest in an idea or experience, but the term 'about' does not, I believe, indicate that their work is illustrative of something. They are not 'representing' an idea as Dormer (1994) implies (see chapter three for the critique of Dormer's argument). The 'about' refers to their individual preoccupation which is the starting point and ongoing focus for investigation within the work. It is that which sparks their interest and curiosity.

As noted above, the Art Making Model does not address the wider context from which the art process emerges and why these artists become preoccupied with specific issues is not discussed in the interviews. Having analysed the transcripts and reflected upon this first stage of the process I recognise the value of examining it with interviewees, but its significance only really emerged in later stages of the research. However, other artists' writings suggest that determining a core interest is a delicate process. Sol LeWitt returns to the interplay of the unconscious and conscious when

he says 'in terms of ideas the artist is free to even surprise himself (*sic*). Ideas are discovered by intuition' (*Ibid*, 1967: 834). Whereas Ben Shahn implies that the 'Biography of a painting' (*Ibid*, 1957) emerges from the artist's personal history and current context, as well as their intellectual, psychological and emotional situation. In other words, the entirety of an artist's experience broadly informs the development of her work.

By connecting the individual context and personal history of the protagonist with their art process, Shahn draws attention to the place of experience in art making. This echoes the previous chapter's examination of artists' knowledge, where I drew attention to its experiential and context-specific character. In later chapters I return to these themes and examine art practice in relation to models of experiential learning (Dennison & Kirk, 1990, Kolb, 1984). In doing so I position the art process as a form of experiential meaning making that shapes the teaching and learning process artist educators engender in the gallery.

So what prompts artists to focus? Within the context of professional practice Schon (1982) provides a relevant perspective on how individuals identify and address specific issues. He describes a shift from 'problem-solving' to 'problem-setting' (*Ibid,* 1987*:* 40), wherein practitioners make sense of uncertain and complex situations by naming the things they will attend to and framing the context in which they will attend to them. In this way Schon foregrounds the active nature of this initial stage. Applying the concept of problem-setting to artistic practice, the implication is that artists begin to make meaning by 'naming' particular issues to explore at any one time. But this should not suggest that the 'naming' aspect of artistic process is neatly differentiated and narrowly defined. For example, Liz, Michèle and Esther's statements regarding their work are broad and can accommodate many different elements. Rebecca Binch and Lucy Pedlar also see artists' interests as necessarily wide-ranging, as they declare in the model: 'ATTENTION! There might be many concurrent strands of interest/curiosity that may/may not link, don't let this alarm you!'

By saying this, these artists acknowledge the richness, complexity and potentially muddled aspects of the art process.

The recognition that artists feel comfortable pursuing different lines of enquiry concurrently allows for fluidity and uncertainty in the artistic process. Associated with this is the idea that artists may not know what they are doing (in the sense of being wholly in control and certain), but that uncertainty is a positive aspect of the meaning making process. As Prentice (2000(a)) above notes, a tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity is a key criterion for creativity. Esther appears to recognise how, as an artist she feels comfortable not knowing how projects will develop when she says:

> For me seeing the initial thing, the concept of the project is what is there at the beginning and some possibilities of how it might be achieved, but never a sense of seeing it from beginning to end. Much more of a sense of... building it. [It is] more organic, it's kind of responsive to the way the last thing went... that sense of an organic building is about thinking 'well, we'll cross that bridge when we come to it' (Group interview).

Esther appears to feel comfortable embarking on projects with only a broad sense of what she is seeking and is confident that she can respond when unexpected events require her to adapt her practice.

5.4 Artists' skills

In chapter seven I consider how artists' familiarity with the instability and variety of art practice, as an element of these artists' expertise, facilitates learning in the Art into Life sessions in the gallery, where plural modes of investigation are prioritised. For now my analysis of the model moves to examine further aspects of the art making process and consider how engaging in this process provides artists with additional skills and knowledge which are relevant, or potentially problematic, in the gallery context.

5.4.1 The importance of looking as part of knowledge building

The second stage of the model identifies that artists 'stop' and 'look', suggesting that artists engage in careful and prolonged observation. Priority is given to the visual experience and emphasis is on slowing down in order to see. Chapter seven examines the significance of looking within learning and teaching in the gallery, where artist educators encourage participants to 'look' carefully at works of art. However I note here that, responding to my question regarding the best use of artists as educators, Liz Ellis describes why they are effective at enabling learners to take time when observing art:

> I think of these ways.. [of] looking, slowing down, becoming aware of what you feel, processing that and reflecting on that. We are used to feeling comfortable about looking, because a lot of our training has been about that and.. a lot of time that's what you're doing – you're learning to look, which is really important.

Artists' education, according to Liz, encourages practitioners to feel familiar with looking. As the model identifies, for artists such as Liz, looking is an integral and crucial skill employed to build knowledge and gain understanding. Prentice (1995) confirms that 'it is common for artists and designers to stress the importance of the periods of time they spend looking and thinking about a work in progress' (*Ibid*, 1995:12). Both he and Liz draw attention to looking, analysis and reflection, which are understood to happen concurrently. Looking is therefore constructed as involving more than recognition, since it involves (and leads to increased) comprehension also.

Whilst being careful and considered, looking contributes to artists' knowledge in particular ways. For instance, Michaela describes how she was encouraged by her tutors at art school to 'look at' specific British artists because of the way they resolved certain formal issues. She examined these artists to gain new understandings for herself and in this way looking becomes part of a process of acquiring knowledge. In the model this knowledge acquisition process is described as 'gathering information/data/stuff and collecting'.

The term 'gathering information' as used in the Art Making model implies a process of data acquisition not dissimilar to that employed within ethnography. The association brings further connections between art practice and research (a recurring theme throughout this thesis) that also emerges in artists' writings. The artist Alan Kaprow, for example, sees his practice as akin to research, since it allows him to conceptualise art making away from the model of inspired artist. Instead he identifies with 'the inquisitive and procedural approach of researchers to their work' as this approach allows him to 'begin to consider and act upon substantive questions about consciousness, communication and culture' (*Ibid*, 1976:177). Kaprow returns us to the concept of inquisitiveness or curiosity, but also suggests that the artist as researcher asks and seeks to answer questions.

For the artists interviewed here, the 'substantive' questions ranged from identity and the body (for Esther) to the experience of living in East London (for Liz). Kaprow therefore expands the idea of art making being a process of enquiry stimulated by an artist's own curiosity by drawing attention to questioning as an active process. The artist educators also identify that questioning is central to their art practice. Liz Ellis' comment that her practice is concerned with 'the kinds of questions that I find myself asking' echoes Kaprow's assertion. Equally Esther Sayers states 'some of the best advice I had on my MA [was] think about your work as a series of questions, rather than a series of answers or statements'. By saying this, these interviewees highlight how questioning underpins their approach to building knowledge. This is significant, as commonalities exist with the pedagogic process within the community education programme where the education curators 'aim to encourage an attitude of questioning' (Cox & Keizer, 2003: 3) and interpretations are framed as focused enquiry.

Data collection and knowledge acquisition are relevant in the context of the previous chapter's analysis of practitioner knowledge. In particular I return to Eraut's (1994) ideas regarding how practitioners use propositional knowledge. The interview data illuminates the relationship certain artists have with propositional knowledge and with

artists' techniques for example. In the previous chapter I referenced Michaela's differentiation of the approaches she takes as an art historian and an artist to contextualize Eraut's ideas. In a second quotation here, Michaela expands on this theme and in doing so, provides an example of how an artist might gather information:

> As an art historian you are approaching [a work] with a certain kind of empathy; you are trying to understand the position of the artist in a wider context. Whereas if you are looking at an artist to try and sort something out in your own work it's like this magpie, almost greediness. You want something that's going to get you out of a jam. So … instead of trying to understand the artist in the context or think around the subject or the artist, you just think I'll take that.

As an artist Michaela identifies and acquires knowledge to inform her practice, rather than to develop broader theories relating to the artists she is looking at. As Scott *et al's* (2004) concept of Dispositional and Transdisciplinary knowledge (described in the previous chapter) delineates the ways such knowledge contributes to the development of an individual and their practice, rather than the formulation of 'generalizable accounts' (*Ibid*, 2004: 48). I see similarities between Scott *et al*'s outline, my interpretation of the gathering information concept in the model and these artists' perceptions of their artistic process. In later chapters I consider the benefits and limitations of the artists' approach to knowledge acquisition when translated into pedagogic strategies in the gallery.

5.4.2 Considering a dialogic process of making meaning between artist and artwork

The Art Making Model describes practitioners realising their ideas in a publicly accessible form, albeit one that is developmental and open to significant change. Referred to as the 're-present' stage, it includes several activities: 'drawing/photography/casting/frottage/put in bag/write description/video/record sound'. Although each activity involves making, not all result in a physical object. Moreover, their variety suggests that the models' authors, Binch and Pedlar, like the artists interviewed for this thesis, do not define themselves according to one medium. Instead ideas can be explored using a range of techniques and materials.

The model does not detail how active making is enacted. However I find Prentice's (1995) description of engaging with materials (typically within painting) in order to realise a work as 'analogous to a conversational exchange' (*Ibid*, 1995:12) useful, since it corresponds with my own experience. Comments in the interviews also suggest that these artists engage in organic processes that involve experimentation and exchange with their work. Michaela describes how she attempted to resolve an issue by working with her painting:

> So we'd prop the painting against the wall and was that any better? Rather than having it on the wall, or you know, just try things out.

As Prentice outlines, here Michaela appears to interact with her work; she is in a metaphorical dialogue with the artwork as it is constructed. Dialogue, as defined in chapter one, enables meanings to be constructed collaboratively and the exchange between artist and work is subtle. Timing is crucial and attention must be paid to aspects of each exchange, to allow the process to be organic and 'truly generative' (*Ibid*, 1995: 13). Fluidity and openness (as Pollock and LeWitt acknowledge above) are therefore crucial, but also consideration and judiciousness. Artists' experience of these creative meaning making skills, which surface throughout the model, inform the pedagogic process in the gallery as examined in chapters seven and eight.

It is not only within painting that the concept of conversation as a making, as opposed to interpretive, process emerges. As noted above, the Art Making Model does not extend to more negotiated forms of practice. Therefore I turn to the construction of 'dialogical' art practice (Kester, 2004), which was touched on in chapter two. Dialogical practice recognises conversational encounter as the means through which work comes into being and identifies that through dialogue artists, in collaboration with others, can 'catalyze emancipatory insights' (*Ibid*, 2004: 69). Dialogue is seen as integral to this particular meaning making process; by engaging in conversation artists build ideas and develop in ways they could not have managed alone. In other words, understanding is dialogic in character and meaning is generated within a two-sided relationship between speaker and listener.

Kester's approach resonates with the experiences of those research participants who worked in community arts projects. Michèle describes her involvement in a community arts photography project as 'more challenged and egalitarian', since it involved a 'valuing of the relationship between the artist and the community they were going to work with.' She perceives this collaborative arts process enabled issues to be articulated through dialogue between artists and others. Like Kester, 'communicating and bridging' was central to her practice as a community artist and she acknowledges that her involvement with such participatory projects informs her work in the gallery.

Although I recognise that meanings can be generated internally without spoken dialogue, I am drawn to Kester and Prentice's concepts of art making as a dialogic process for three reasons. First, they give insights into the research participants' (and my own) art practice. Second, developing knowledge and articulating ideas through dialogue chimes with my understanding of the research process, as emerging through the exchanges between me and the artist educators (see chapter three). Finally, evidence suggests that dialogue between artist educators and learners shapes learning experiences in the gallery. Prentice and Kester's positioning of art making as 'dialogic' thereby enables connections to be made and critical positions taken between art practice and pedagogy in the gallery and also to the research process.

In chapter eight I return to this when analysing research participants' perceptions of their exchanges with learners and examine factors that contribute to and detract from them. I consider the extent to which artist educators provide answers and promote dialogue with artworks and learners, who are encouraged to embark on their own exchanges with art objects and their peers. Hence I examine how meanings are constructed between artist and learners, and between both of these and artworks.

5.4.3 The role of critical reflection within art practice

The Art Making Model identifies that practitioners make, but also rationalise and reflect on their activities during the artistic process. The authors of the model refer to this as 'sort/order/review/discuss/drink tea', which indicates their particular understanding of reflection; it is complicated and multifaceted. I look now at these terms to build up a more detailed picture of what reflection might mean in the context of art making and identify whether research participants and other writers understand reflection in similar ways.

The authors of the model include 'sort' and 'order' as part of the reflective process. These words could suggest that, at moments during the artistic process, a certain rationalisation takes place. Yet, in the section above it was noted that artists are comfortable pursuing different, and potentially conflicting, interests concurrently and that there is scope for the irrational and intuitive within the art process. Therefore the identification of a rational process of sorting and ordering might appear contradictory. However, a practitioner such as Shahn (1957) argues for 'art which is the product of willing and intending' (*Ibid,* 1957: 21) and positions the artist, not as 'a non-thinking 'medium' through which ideas flow' (*Ibid,* 1957: 19), but an analytical and reflective creator, who constantly makes decisions regarding their work. This construction of the artist echoes the Enlightenment portrayal (as examined in the previous chapter) in its focus on the autonomous, rational practitioner (Porter, 1990) and is suggested by Esther's perception of herself as an 'independent problem-solver that works through things'.

For Shahn an integral part of the artistic process involves artists editing or simplifying to articulate ideas effectively. He describes a painter operating as both producer and critic. The 'critic' within the artist performs the task of ensuring that the decisions and actions the 'producer' undertakes result in the artist's ideas being realised through the form of the image. The 'critic' therefore represents a process of rationalisation, which exists to ensure that the artist edits all extraneous material (both conceptual and

physical) effectively during the artistic process, to articulate his or her ideas coherently.

There is recognition amongst the interviewed artists that the process of making meaning through art involves production and elimination. Liz Ellis refers to moments of refinement during her own practice when she says:

> If I think about all the things I've been making recently, they're about things in series, they're about ideas of maps; ideas of specific responses to specific locations and then it's been about editing those responses (my emphasis).

We see here how initially Liz mentions her range of ideas and then acknowledges a process of selection to make her work. The artist Richard Wentworth hints at this same selective process when he describes how he makes his work:

> If I want to do something about that thoughtfulness, if I want to put it into the world or I want to de-privatise it then there are various mechanical methods or procedures which are to my taste and pass a kind of philosophical muster. I can argue for why they are done that way. But that isn't to say they couldn't be done another way. (Wentworth interviewed in Raney, 2003: 223)

Wentworth chooses one way of articulating his ideas over another. His, Liz and Ben Shahn's observations suggests that art making involves artists rationalising all their potential sources of interest and ideas so as to realise these as discrete pieces of work.

Yet Wentworth's argues that his decisions do not equate to an exclusive or 'right' way of making meaning; they are how he chooses to make his thoughts visible. The analysis of how artist educators negotiate multiple readings of works of art in the gallery context in later chapters draws on two aspects of this process of refinement. First I consider whether artists' experience of their art practice enables them to accommodate, but also rationalise, a range of meanings when working with learners in the gallery. Second I examine the way artist educators perceive artists' decision making processes shape the meaning of an art work and whether this causes them to prioritise this with learners.

The process suggested by 'sort/order' is accompanied by 'review'. This evaluative activity has been alluded to previously with reference to Shahn's construction of the artist as an analytical and reflective creator and Prentice's (2000(b)) analysis of how artistic activity presents an 'inherent duality' (*Ibid*, 2000: 528) between making and reflection. Art making can therefore be constructed as an ongoing and embedded process of action and review; each equally important to the realisation of artists' ideas.

The extent to which reflection is an unconscious and/or explicit activity that artists undertake, in my view affects how artist educators make their knowledge or learning explicit in the context of the gallery. In the previous chapter I referenced 'tacit knowledge' (Polyani, 1967), which allows a practitioner to recognise, judge and respond to given scenarios without requiring conscious thought. I suggested that artistic knowledge is largely tacit and predominantly accessible only through practice itself. I drew on Schon's concept of 'knowing-in-action' (1982); a form of unconscious knowledge analogous to tacit knowledge, which is revealed through the action of the practitioner.

Key aspects of 'knowing-in-action' are 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action', wherein the practitioner considers and evaluates their actions as they are doing them in the first instance and after the event in the second (*Ibid*, 1982). Thus the process of solving a problem is constructed as a series of reflective moments each followed by actions through which a practitioner critiques his or her original thinking and modifies it accordingly, hence the learning. This process is similar to Shahn's (1957) analytical and reflective process; to the conversational exchange identified by Prentice (1995) and the active/reflective mode of art making described by Pollock (Pollock interviewed in Raney, 2003) in the previous chapter. Common to these is the counterpoint between doing and reflecting which is integral to learning and artistic meaning making. The concept of a form of embedded 'review', understood to be largely unconscious and not necessarily involving verbal articulation, is thus shared by commentators on artistic practice and professional epistemology.

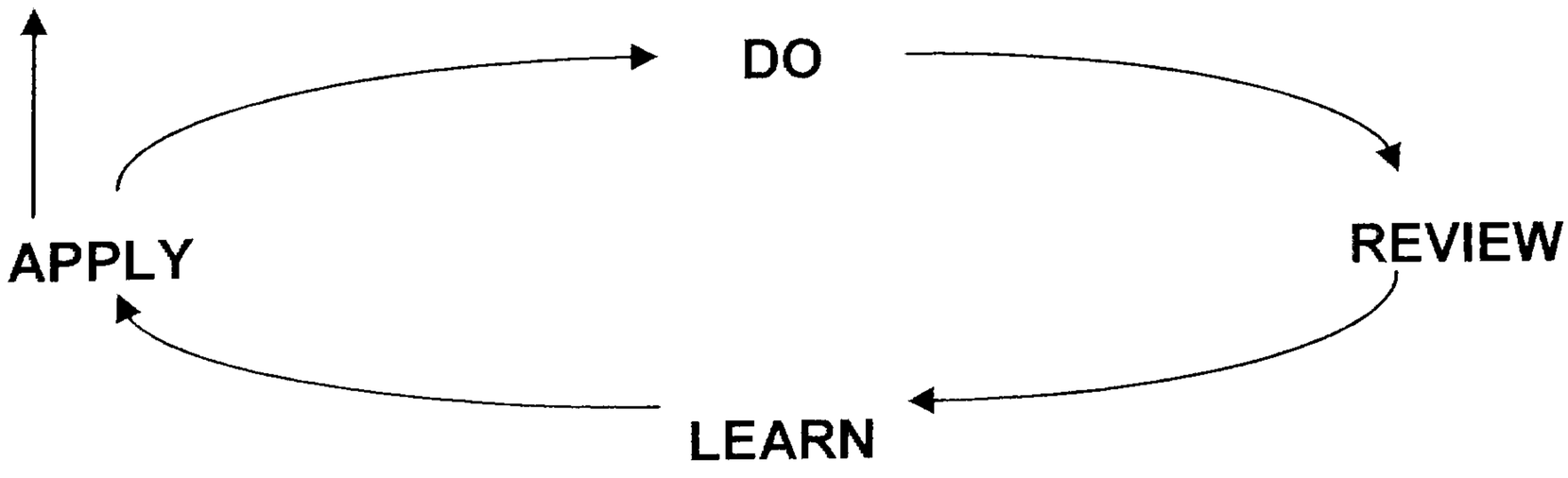
So is this how interviewees perceive reviewing within their artistic and pedagogic practice? Michaela's comment cited above about her positioning her paintings implies an active and reflective process. Likewise Liz Ellis values reflection and encourages learners to look and to process what they have seen:

> I really noticed that more and more [of] our job is... not only helping people to look, but then... reflect on what they've seen, by... articulating to somebody else what they see; by realising that somebody else sees something different and being actually able to hear what somebody else has said. That kind of dialogue is really rare and needs to be fostered, particularly around modern and contemporary practice. I think [artists] are good at doing that – reflection.

Liz emphasises reflection as part of the learning process and considers that artists are reflective practitioners. The education curator Alison Cox also recognises that with some artists; 'you feel that [their practice] is very much allied to a thoughtful response to something and that's kind of intellectual in a way'. These interviewees see particular artists are adept at reviewing their work on an ongoing basis.

However learners' reflection in the gallery is manifest through dialogue and shared insights, according to Liz. She positions it predominantly as explicit rather than an implicit and internal aspect of meaning making. These comments are illuminated by considering how reflection and learning are portrayed in experiential learning models. In Kolb's cycle for example, learning is described as the 'process whereby knowledge is created through the transfer of new experiences' (*Ibid*, 1983: 38). Similarly Dennison and Kirk's (1990) model (figure 5.2) identifies the different aspects of experience, which include doing and reflecting, to highlight a process of active learning.

Figure 5.2 An Experiential Learning Model (Dennison & Kirk, 1990)



In this model reviewing contributes to learning by allowing for insights and new experiences to be acknowledged. It can be wholly private, but can also be made explicit through group discussions during which students exchange perceptions and challenge ideas (Dennison & Kirk, 1990). Learning thus involves public and private aspects; with private reflection interspersed with public evaluation and theorising (Watkins *et al*, 1996). Liz appears to be advocating this latter more explicit form of review and we might therefore assume that the review process Michaela, Liz and Alison identify for artists is public.

Yet Liz does not suggest that artists engage in reflection through conversation with others in their own practice. Lucy Wilson's observation on her father's practice (given in the previous chapter), wherein she concludes that artists do not talk, they do, likewise suggests that public and shared review is less common for some artists. Prentice, Shahn and Pollock also infer that reflection within artistic practice is essentially private. So can we deduce that Rebecca Binch and Lucy Pedlar advocate more formal and explicit moments of review in the model? One indication is given by their introducing 'discuss' at this stage of the process, which suggests that they see reflection occurring through conversations.

5.4.4 Art making as a solitary undertaking: considering the legacy of the avant-garde construction

Although conscious of the place discursive review plays in the model, I am aware that artists may not have opportunities, or want to discuss their practice with others on a regular basis. It is worth noting that the Art Making Model was developed as part of a collaborative project, by two artists. The model is therefore emerging from a scenario where conversation is happening already. This, in my experience, is not usual. I am also conscious that within the dominant 'reception' and 'construction' models of learning (examined in chapter one) meaning making is understood as a singular pursuit; knowledge is constructed 'individually in people's heads' (Watkins, 2003:14).

So why might artists not engage in more communal forms of reflection? One reason is suggested by Liz's comment on her art school experience:

> The whole individualism of art college really appalled me... I remember being a bit appalled by the idea of these art students working away in their little cordoned-off studios.

Art school is perceived by Liz to prioritise artists working on their own. Other interviewees also describe artists' practice as a singular and solitary activity, with Esther referring to herself as 'the sole, independent problem-solver that works through things' and that during art school 'you are praised for solving problems for yourself.'

The art school discourse, as Liz and Esther perceive it, equates the artist with a singular vision and unique style. This corresponds with the prioritising of autonomy within the Enlightenment model and the conception of the individual as having sole responsibility for their development and destiny (Porter, 1990). The 'individualism' in art schools also hints at the continued legacy of the Romantic construction of the lone artist heroically struggling to articulate their individual vision. This was taken up and celebrated within modernism (Meecham & Sheldon, 2000) and it contains 'the subtle and far-reaching message concerning the loneliness and isolation of the self' (Gablik, 1995: 17). Thus it would appear that, at least within the art schools that Liz and Esther attended, art making continues to be informed by a notion of modernist, and specifically, avant-garde practice.

The concept of the 'avant-garde' is disputed, but within modernist art practice is associated with a commitment to progress and emphasis on individualism, exclusivity and originality (*Op cit*, 2000). Emerging in the late nineteenth century, this construction locates the avant-garde artist at the forefront of cultural practice, challenging existing conventions and exploring the new. Although the continued existence of an avant-garde has been questioned (Foster, 1990), what surfaces in these interviews, (and which was examined in the previous chapter) is a residual preoccupation with the innovative artist and the originality of their practice.

The emphasis on the articulation of individual and innovative ideas encourages an esotericism which can preclude the sharing of ideas and communal forms of reflection and meaning making (Kester, 2005) (criticisms which can equally be made of more individualistic pedagogic models). Furthermore, as noted in chapter two, critiques of the isolationist artist have surfaced since at least the 1930s (Benjamin, 1934) through to the community arts movement (Dickson, 1995) and more recently within more socially engaged practice (Butler & Reiss, 2007). Liz has worked on community arts projects, yet even though she is critical of the focus on the individual at art school, she admits to 'finding a great attraction in that [singular construction of the artist] and kind of being appalled by it in equal parts probably'. She also acknowledges the importance of maintaining her own practice, when she says:

> [For] all my reservations about people working away in their little garret, equally I know that going to my studio to escape is absolutely essential.

Her comments reveal that she balances a commitment to her own individual practice with more dialogic forms of meaning making, but also that she retains an understanding of the artist as the original and individual creator. Liz, as Rebecca Binch and Lucy Pedlar appear to do, differentiates her singular studio practice from more collaborative forms of artistic engagement.

The continued focus on the individual within arts schools could indicate that not all artists are necessarily going to work effectively in more collaborative scenarios, such as the contemporary gallery education context. Education curators Joleen Keiser and Alison Cox encourage artist educators to actively share practice, but note that some practitioners are challenged by this:

> **Joleen (J)**: There is that ongoing dialogue and process of development with them as artist educators, but also with us and how we are all together... trying to develop
> **Alison (A)**: Yes... because there have been cases in the past where... artists who have worked on education programmes have felt very protective of their intellectual rights and that has extended to not being very sharing of their ideas, or what resources they have and it would be difficult to survive as an artist educator if you didn't have that attitude of wanting to reflect and learn from each other.

> **J**: But I think that is also something that we demanded of the artist educators – to work in that way and there are certain people..
> **A**: Some don't find it easy.

In Alison and Joleen's view, although conversation between artists and their work can be seen as integral to artistic development and meaning making, some artists may be unfamiliar with (or unwilling to) entering into reflective dialogue with others. Whereas it appears the artist educators at Tate Modern are skilled at working collaboratively and constructing shared meanings in the gallery through a process involving explicit reflection, it cannot be assumed that other fine art practitioners share this expertise.

5.5 Transformation: examining how the artwork embodies knowledge

The 'final' stage of the model is described as 'transformation', although the words 're-present again' and 're-contextualise' are also present. Connections are made to the earlier 're-present' moment, when artists' ideas are first made explicit. At the same time Rebecca Binch and Lucy Pedlar emphasise that the 'transformation' stage prompts new discoveries and informs the ongoing progress of an artist's practice. As stated in the model, the transformation stage 'doesn't have to be the end or a conclusion, it can be a set of questions and beginnings' (see figure 5.1).

My examination of the 'transformation' stage focuses on two issues: what is being 'transformed' and why is this stage described preferentially as a set of questions, rather than a conclusion? These issues help conceptualise art practice as a process of making meaning, since I argue here that art objects can be seen as the articulation of artists' knowledge and skills. In other words an art object encapsulates meanings made by the artist through the art process. Second the two issues illuminate the artist educators' perceptions of artworks and their subsequent negotiation of these works with learners in the gallery. To address the question of what is being transformed I return to the concept of 'practical knowledge' (Eraut, 1994) and specifically to Prentice's (2000(b)) examination of how this knowledge is made explicit in art practice.

Practical knowledge is acquired through experience (Eraut, 1994, Prentice, 2000(b), Scott *et al*, 2004). For artists, this involves 'direct involvement whilst engaging with expressive media' (*Ibid*, 2000(b): 523); it is through making, reflection and engaging with materials that knowledge develops. This is the process effectively described by the Art Making Model. This practical knowledge, according to Prentice, can be revealed in two ways. First, as with 'knowing in action' (Schon, 1982), an artist's practical knowledge is demonstrated through his or her actions; '[through] the skilled execution of the performance' (*Ibid*, 1982: 25). This form of tacit knowledge is characterised by its non-verbal and contextual quality. It enables the artist to engage with materials and techniques to articulate ideas successfully.

Artists' knowledge is also made explicit in the 'imaginative outcome' of the artistic process, which embodies 'the knowledge required for [it's] production' and, for Prentice, represents the artist's ideas and feelings 'realised in visual form' (*Ibid*, 2000(b): 523). The art work thus encapsulates the idea (which corresponds with the original focus of curiosity outlined in the first stage of the model) that the artist is trying to articulate. At the same time an artwork embodies the practical knowledge needed to make that original idea explicit; it reveals the strategies the artist has chosen to make their ideas public. Therefore, as Refsum says, 'when the artistic working processes are successful and finished one can see the material result of the artist's knowledge' (*Ibid*, 2002: 6).

The 'imaginative outcome' (*Op cit*, 2000(b)) is therefore constructed as embodying the artist's ideas and feelings and their practical knowledge. However I wish to distinguish the emotional aspects of the process from the notion that an artist makes decisions which are evident in a work. This is because ideas and feelings are arguably harder to recover, whereas formal decisions are potentially more comprehensible. In other words, we may never 'know' what Rothko's ideas or feelings were when he painted his series of 'Four Seasons' works that currently hang in Tate Modern, but we can deduce that he opted to make these works as paintings, of a particular size, using specific materials. As examined in chapters six, seven and

eight, exploring why Rothko may have made those decisions can provide a stimulating starting point for building interpretations with learners in the gallery.

As noted in chapter two, contrasting views of whether it is possible to determine an artist's ideas, feelings or intentions from the art work inform gallery education practice in Tate Modern and elsewhere. Yet in specific literature written by art practitioners addressing artistic practice, the art object is consistently identified as embodying artists' knowledge (Prentice, 2000(b), Refsum, 2002, Sullivan, 2005). The implication is, therefore, that such knowledge is accessible to viewers and contributes to the artwork's meaning. Consequently, whereas a visual theorist such as Rose (2001) may debate the contribution of an artwork's maker to interpretations, some artists see artists' ideas and knowledge, as revealed in the art object, as making a vital contribution to its meaning.

Furthermore, researchers considering the interpretive process in the gallery also position artworks as embodying artists' knowledge. For instance, Lachapelle *et al* (2003) construct the art object in terms of 'objectified knowledge', which is:

> Embodied in a work of art each time the artist makes a decision regarding the work's message, subject matter, stylistic qualities, structure, medium, format, materials, and production process (*Ibid,* 2003: 87)

Similarities can be identified between the concepts of the 'imaginative outcome' and objectified knowledge; both connect art objects explicitly with artists' knowledge. In Lachapelle *et al*'s model, objective knowledge provides a basis for the encounter between viewer and artworks. For these researchers, it is the interchange between objectified knowledge, the personal knowledge of the viewer and additional contextual and theoretical information that occurs during the interpretive process in the gallery which allows artworks' meanings to emerge. Lachapelle *et al*'s acknowledgement of the role of objectified knowledge in shaping meanings usefully connects the art process with meaning making in the gallery. Hence I draw on their concepts when constructing my own model (the Meaning Making in the Gallery (MMG) framework) of artist-led pedagogy in chapter nine.

In the Art Making Model the transformation stage is the moment when artists' ideas and knowledge are made explicit, but also channeled into the next stage of their artistic process. The model therefore echoes Scott *et al*'s (2004) construction of 'dispositional and trans-disciplinary knowledge' where the rationale for practical knowledge acquisition is to inform the development of practice and assist the individual's understanding of given situations. The interview data indicates that some of the case study artists also understand art making in these terms. Located as part of an ongoing process, the art object informs thinking and develops practice. Here Michèle describes moving through different media and how earlier work informs more recent preoccupations;

> I stopped painting and started using objects, making installations. I made video, continual series. If I draw, it's usually a series. I've never presented my photographs as a single image. It's really weird that I've ended up doing that and ironically it's because of paintings, my love of still life... I ought to dig out those 70s and 80s pictures that I took because I think they probably are interesting as they say certain things about the time and they feed directly into what I am doing now.

Her comments indicate that Michèle's earlier photographs perform two functions. They inform her subsequent work, but also articulate her ideas about the period in which they were made. In this way these photographs are part of the artist's implicit process of building practical knowledge, but potentially at the same time they make Michèle's knowledge explicit. This dual role for the art object corresponds with the 'transformation' stage in the Art Making Model. The arrows in the diagram loop back to the 'interest/curiosity' stage and simultaneously branch outwards, suggesting that at this moment the artist's knowledge building process moves beyond an individual preoccupation. It is at this stage that the art making process comes up against the interpretive activities of those viewing the artwork. This demonstrates the centrality of the 'transformation' stage; it is the pivot around which processes of production and interpretation meet.

Revisiting the interview data and particular literature potentially gives further insights into how artists consider their knowledge is revealed to the viewer through their

artworks. In the construction of the artist as 'conceptual investigator' I argue that art practice can be seen as a process of enquiry. I note above how artist educators, including Liz and Esther, recognise questioning and problem solving in the process and outcomes of their artistic practice. Esther in particular describes her practice as a questioning process and her art works as not being finite or closed entities. Furthermore, Griselda Pollock refers to 'art not being expressive, but provocative'. (Pollock interviewed in Raney, 2003:146), which implies that art does not just express something of the artist, but raises issues and becomes a means of provoking others to ask questions. This evidence points to the art object (as the outcome of a questioning process) existing as a speculative and discursive proposal, rather than a definitive statement made by an artist.

The interview data reveals the case study artists' understanding of themselves as individuals engaged in subjective modes of enquiry. Typically these artists are seeking to gain greater understanding of and articulate their experiences. Evident is the artists' preoccupation with investigating their individual ideas and it is noticeable that only Michèle refers to how her work might be interpreted by others (see chapter four). Yet even Michèle acknowledges how she finds it difficult to think about the audience and recognises that viewers may not interpret her work as she expects. This could imply that these artists' primary consideration is their process of production. Arguably, the reception of the work is perceived by them as a separate issue, effectively beyond their control. Alison Cox describes this duality accordingly:

> [Artists] may be exploring something in particular, but they don't necessarily want someone else to read their work in the same way, so they welcome multiple viewpoints.

Alison's comment, along with Esther and Michèle's admissions, indicates that these interviewees have an ambiguous relationship with the transformation moment and how knowledge is made explicit in the art object. Each acknowledges instability of meaning as regards artworks; in Esther's case because the work is speculative, in Alison and Michèle's because, although it can be seen as an artist's work, art generates multiple interpretations. This implies that, although artists' ideas and

practical knowledge can be made explicit at the transformation moment, the interviewees perceive that this 're-contextualization' does not constitute the only meaning of the work. Artworks are open to further negotiation and continual re-reading by others.

A sense of the tentative and provisional quality of the knowledge embodied in artworks is suggested by the artist Richard Wentworth. Art practice is 'a way of making your own little paper dart with messages on it. You hope it is out there flying around and landing and taking off again' (Wentworth interviewed in Raney, 2003: 221). However, whereas Wentworth acknowledges some sense of his contribution to the meaning of an artwork, the artist Keith Haring implies that meaning is largely determined by the viewer:

> Often when I am drawing in the subway In New York City an observer will patiently stand by and watch until I have finished drawing and then, quickly as I attempt to walk away will shout out 'but what does it mean?' I usually answer: 'that's your part, I only do the drawings' (Haring, 1984: 369)

These comments illuminate how some artists perceive their knowledge potentially being made explicit in their work. In particular, Haring suggests that an artist can demonstrate his practical knowledge (in Haring's case by doing the drawing), but that this knowledge does not necessarily equate to the artwork's meaning; the latter being constructed through engagement with the viewer.

A further interpretation of the relationship between knowledge and meaning as located in the artwork is provided by Buchler's (2000) differentiation (quoted in chapter three) between academic research, which is concerned with the production of 'expert knowledge' and art, which constitutes an understanding of experience. In this construction the art object offers one way of seeing and is not an 'objective', context-free, generalisable statement. In other words it represents how the artist has made sense of an issue, rather than how they have explained it. Consequently although the artwork may mean one thing to the artist, it does not present a definitive or universal account and thus allows for the construction of alternative and plural meanings.

Buchler's construction of art practice as an experiential process of making meaning, as opposed to an explanatory process concerned with the production of theoretical knowledge, chimes with evidence from the interview data and texts authored by art practitioners. It also echoes experiential learning models (Dennison & Kirk, 1990, Kolb, 1984) which are revisited in chapter nine. For although a mixed picture emerges in terms of how these artists locate their knowledge in artworks and how that contributes to viewers' interpretations, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that they (and the authors of the Art Making Model) perceive the art process as a form of experiential meaning making.

5.7 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has interrogated a model of the artistic process in detail with reference to the interview data and specific literature. It has examined a number of interconnected themes which have implications for artist-led teaching and learning. In particular the analysis has identified a number of skills and aptitudes these artists perceive they have (notably looking, questioning, reflecting, tolerating ambiguity and rationalising complexity) which, as later chapters identify, they utilise in their pedagogy. The chapter has also considered art practice, positioning it as a process of individual meaning making, rather than a mode of universal explanation. In doing this I have drawn attention to connections with the research process and experiential modes of learning.

Before moving onto the following chapter's narrative interpretation of an Art into Life session at Tate Modern, it is valuable to summarise key features of the artistic process as portrayed here.

- The artistic process is one of enquiry that emerges from practitioners' interests
- Art practice foregrounds questioning as a mode of knowledge building
- It involves the intuitive, playful and spontaneous, alongside the rational and reflective
- It embraces concurrent strands of investigation

- It involves acquiring and building knowledge to develop individual preoccupations, rather than the provision of generalisable accounts
- It can be seen to resemble a 'dialogic' process, wherein understanding develops through the exchange between artist and art object
- The art process 'culminates' in the transformation of artists' ideas and practical knowledge through the artwork. This realisation informs artists' ongoing intellectual and artistic development and provides a starting point for others' interpretive processes

The examination of how these characteristics inform and are evident in teaching and learning in the gallery occupies the following three chapters. Their correspondence with the research process is returned to in chapter nine.

6. Interlude: describing and analysing an 'Art into Life' Community Education session at Tate Modern

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections. The former provides a descriptive interpretation of a particular 'Art into Life' (AiL) education session at Tate Modern which took place in May 2003. This narrative is constructed from notes taken during observation of this session and informed by observations of five other community education sessions (both AiL and others) at Tate Modern. The latter section examines why this session was chosen and its significance in relation to my research questions. The description and interpretation are provided at this stage in the thesis to give my perspective of actual practice taking place in the gallery. Chapters seven and eight build on this exposition through analysis of the research participants' perception of pedagogy in the gallery against an examination of relevant literature.

6.2 A descriptive interpretation of an 'Art into Life' session

In the Education room at Tate Modern Michaela, the artist educator, gathers together resources she needs for the gallery session. She has a box of drawing materials, drawing paper and a collection of varied photographs. Participants are due to arrive at 10.00am for a session lasting 90 minutes. The artist educator has already had a telephone conversation with the group leader during which they established broadly the group's interests. Today she will be working with plumbers from Lambeth College who are training for the NVQ in plumbing. She leaves the Education space and goes up the escalator to join the group. There is a gathering of approximately twenty students, almost all men. The group come together rather haphazardly on the open area outside the 'Nude/Action/Body' suite of galleries. They appear self-conscious and some are late. The session does not start until 10.10am.

The artist educator introduces herself. She gives her name and describes herself as an artist who makes her own work, but who also works at Tate Modern. She asks

how many of them have visited this gallery before; three raise their hands. Approximately half have not been to any gallery before. However, from the short discussion it is apparent the group have a wide range of knowledge and experience of contemporary art.

The artist educator explains they will visit one section of Tate Modern and look at some artworks in detail. Before that she would like them to do a short exercise. She hands everyone a piece of paper and pencil and asks them to draw a body. As she is handing round the paper she explains that it is up to them how they draw this body and there are no 'right' or 'wrong' ways to do this exercise. Some in the group become embarrassed at this request; some make jokes, some do not do it, but the majority complete a drawing and return it to the artist educator. She shows a selection of these drawings back to the group, drawing their attention to the variations amongst the different images. She suggests different ways of approaching the subject of the body; there is the concept of the 'generic' body, for example, represented by a stick figure in one drawing. When someone says he has drawn a picture of himself she talks about the idea of the 'specific' body – someone known. The tone is good humoured and participants make jokes and tease each other. Apart from breaking the ice there is a pedagogic element and the artist educator explains the purposes of the drawing exercise. She identifies that the variety of the drawings they have produced demonstrate that people perceive the body in many ways. Using the students' drawings to make the point, she describes how artists can interpret the body very differently.

The group moves into the 'Nude/Action/Body' suite of galleries. The artist educator has already determined the overall structure of the session and she explains how she would like them to walk fairly quickly round the whole suite and try and sum up their experience in two words. The group move off; some chat amongst themselves and only seem to glance at works, whilst others appear deeply engaged in particular paintings. Individuals begin to voice thoughts and opinions on what they are seeing, for instance they identify shapes and colours in a painting. They begin to discuss

works amongst themselves, at times disagreeing good-naturedly about what they can see and why artists might be attempting to represent particular ideas in a certain way. They articulate what they think the work is about and what they like or dislike. One woman speaks about not wanting to see naked bodies and describes the paintings as pornography. The artist educator affirms this is a valid opinion of the work and asks other participants what they feel about this issue. A short discussion amongst a small group takes place.

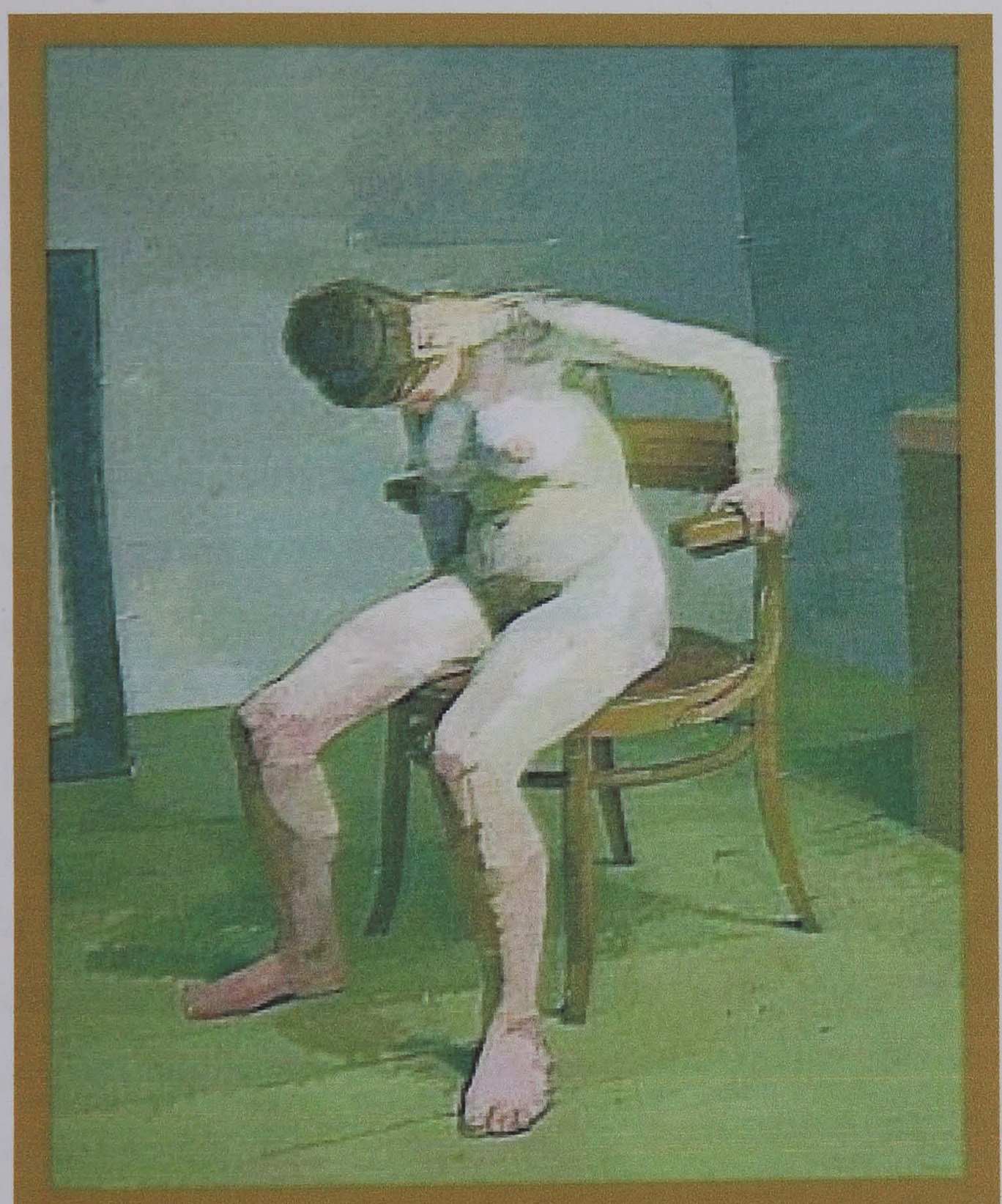
After approximately fifteen minutes Michaela brings the whole group back together and asks people to share their two words. Participants are initially self-conscious and unwilling, but she presses them and eventually one person gives his words as 'personal' and 'expression'. The artist educator thanks him and asks him to elaborate on what he means by these words. For instance what does 'expression' mean to him? The respondent gives a detailed answer about how people express things in different ways and we all have different ideas. At this point the rest of the group listen and do not contribute their own ideas on what expression might mean, so the artist educator asks for other word combinations. Others respond more confidently now and share thoughts, although they do not discuss the responses, but rather wait in turn to give their own. Michaela provides a great deal of encouragement – 'that is very interesting' and asks for further clarification from some.

The artist educator's mode of engagement is to affirm an individual's response (and sometimes to repeat it; 'so what I understand from that is that you chose the word 'frozen' because you see these images as representing a moment frozen in time'). She then asks further questions; 'what is it about the images that makes you think that about them?' At this stage she does not give factual information about specific artists or provide her interpretations of the works. She also returns to those who have not said anything, encouraging them to contribute.

After another fifteen minutes she suggests the group look at one painting in particular. The group move towards Euan Uglow's painting, 'Standing Nude' which is hanging at

one end of the room (see Figure 6.1). The artist educator asks the group to study the painting closely and whilst they look she voices a number of questions; 'is this the kind of image you would have expected to see?' and 'why might the artist have chosen to do a painting?' She gently discourages them from reading the wall text alongside the image, saying that these sessions are about finding out what they as individuals think about these works.

Figure 6.1 Euan Uglow 'Standing Nude' (1960)



The group becomes very engaged in this painting; they voice opinions unprompted and discuss the work in some detail as a group. Some start by articulating what the painting reminds them of and draw on their experiences in relation to it. One woman says it reminded her of how she felt after childbirth; how tired and uncomfortable she was. Another participant observes that the woman looks 'disjointed' and her bowed head suggests she is ashamed of something. This provokes a discussion about the relationship between artist and model. Participants ask lots of questions; 'Why would the artist get her to stay in that position? Is the artist trying to dominate or control her? The artist educator does not provide answers to these questions, but encourages participants to articulate individual responses and discuss amongst themselves. Her role is to nurture and facilitate the dialogue by picking up on certain comments, urging people to clarify their thoughts and allowing different speakers to voice their views. She uses phrases such as 'that's an interesting way of looking at it' and 'yes, I can see why you might think that. Can you say some more about it?'

Discussion amongst group members moves on to the relationship between artist and viewer. One man asks; 'is the artist trying to make us feel uncomfortable or is he showing her looking uncomfortable to make us feel sorry for her? A subsequent response by another participant that 'he [the artist] meant us to feel awkward' allows Michaela to address the subject of artistic intention. She identifies that, as viewers, the group can only presume what the artist was intending, but they can explore what an artist is trying to communicate from the clues a painting gives us. An artist makes choices regarding all aspects of the work, she says, including composition, colours and media, to communicate his or her ideas. These choices are made visible in the artwork. The participants' task is to think about their experience of the artwork in order to make sense for themselves of the choices the artist has made. She urges them to look closely at the painting once more. One man says that he can see now that the artist's positioning of the model affects how we understand the painting; if he had painted her looking relaxed we would think about it differently. Michaela confirms the learner's observation and then goes on to suggest he remembers this issue when looking at other portraits in the future.

The group gathers closer in and the dialogue continues. A man asks; 'Who is the woman and why would the artist want to show her in that dislocated position? Is the artist a man?' At this point the artist educator gives some biographical detail on Euan Uglow (when he lived, where he worked, and certain techniques that he used). She mentions that his paintings took a long time, which meant his models held these difficult positions, often for prolonged periods. Michaela has begun to share her specialist knowledge of the artist, which indicates she has judged that participants are sufficiently confident with their individual interpretations that this information will enrich readings of the work, rather than narrow them.

The group continues to discuss the work for another five minutes. Throughout the discussion other members of the public have been in the gallery. Some are curious and come close to hear what is being said. One woman pushes through participants to see the painting. There is a considerable noise in the gallery and some group members do not participate in the dialogue, choosing rather to stand at the back and talk amongst themselves. This group is large and at times it is difficult for people to hear each other. Michaela tries to involve everyone, encouraging them to gather round, but some appear disinterested. At one stage the group leader talks over the artist educator and then takes a group of students off to look at an adjacent work, whereupon the artist educator immediately asks them to rejoin the main group. She constantly watches participants, asking people to repeat things where necessary and soliciting the views of those she thinks have become disengaged. She makes connections between different observations and refers back to earlier comments. Through this process she gradually brings together different views to build an interpretation of the work that effectively has been constructed by the group.

In the beginning Michaela stands at the front, with her back to the painting and the group around her. Later she moves to the side to look alongside participants. She needs to keep their attention focused on the work and on her; to some degree she has a performative role to play. One participant refers to her as 'the boss'. She laughs and acknowledges this, but stresses she hopes she is not frightening. Whilst

not dominating, she keeps the dialogue moving in a focused, yet open way. A wide-ranging exchange of ideas is encouraged, yet at moments she draws it together and centres it on the artwork. Towards the end of the discussion the dialogic exchange ceases across the entire group and smaller clusters begin forming.

The artist educator becomes involved in a one-to-one conversation with a man who wants more detailed information on the painting. She answers several questions and suggests other works in the collection he might be interested in. However, the group is drifting apart and she regains their attention. She tells them they need to walk through a room entitled 'Naked and Nude' to the next gallery. She asks them to split into groups of three and, as they walk through, discuss which paintings they identify as 'naked' or 'nude' and the difference between these descriptors.

Participants move off and exchange ideas within their groups. The mood is cheerful and relaxed and they assert differing views confidently on whether figures are 'naked' or 'nude'. They no longer appear self-conscious and discuss in detail issues including who would have chosen whether the person was clothed (artist or model) as some think this differentiates nakedness from nudity. They also touch on notions of vulnerability and strength and what it means to be exposed. The artist educator threads herself between these different dialogues. She asks and answers questions, shares her ideas, encourages participants to clarify opinions, but also listens to exchanges without speaking.

The group arrives in the room entitled 'Transfiguration', which contains several artworks and is fairly empty of people. The photographs the artist educator has been carrying are placed upside down. She asks each person to take a photograph and make links between the image they choose and one work. Michaela suggests they start by thinking about what images remind them of; what do they represent, how have they been made. She asks people to form three smaller units as she recognises it is difficult to maintain dialogue (wherein everyone can contribute) in a gathering of over twenty. This makes her task harder in some ways; she needs to move between

different groups, maintaining the momentum of their discussions and supporting and encouraging them where needed. Initially some are unclear what the photographs are for and she explains they are prompts to help them think and possibly give another perspective on the works.

One group are gathered round a sculpture (Germaine Richier's Chess Board (Large Version (1959) (see figure 6.2)). They discuss its form and make connections between the distortion of these sculptures and the Euan Uglow nude. One man asks if this room is still about 'Naked/Nude' or is it addressing 'the Body' more generally. The artist educator responds that she thinks works in this room examine and represent the human condition, rather than the body as nude. She is careful to say this is her view and then introduces the notion of the curatorial voice.

Figure 6.2 Germaine Richier 'Chess Board (Large Version)' (1959)

Michaela explains how Tate Modern's collection has been curated thematically, which is a departure from a more customary historic hang. The curators have brought together works they consider make interesting or stimulating connections, either because of how they are made or because of their content. She encourages participants to make their own connections between works. One man says it is like a detective story and they have to find the answer. The artist educator agrees but

emphasises there is not one right answer at the end; they should seek to make individual interpretations of the artworks and connections between them.

After about twenty minutes the artist educator unites the whole group and asks for feedback. By now participants seem happy to challenge each other and the artist educator and explore multi-layered issues. One man describes Alan Davie's 'Image of the Fish God' (1956) as 'abstract' (see Figure 6.3). The artist educator asks him to qualify what he means, which he does by saying it does not show anything recognisable like a person. The artist educator agrees with him and adds that 'abstract' also has particular meaning in art historical contexts. She introduces the concept of 'the symbolic' and talks about the body as a 'stand in'. Michaela asks what different symbols in the works might represent. People make personal responses, describing what symbols mean to them and the artist educator builds on these to make more general points.

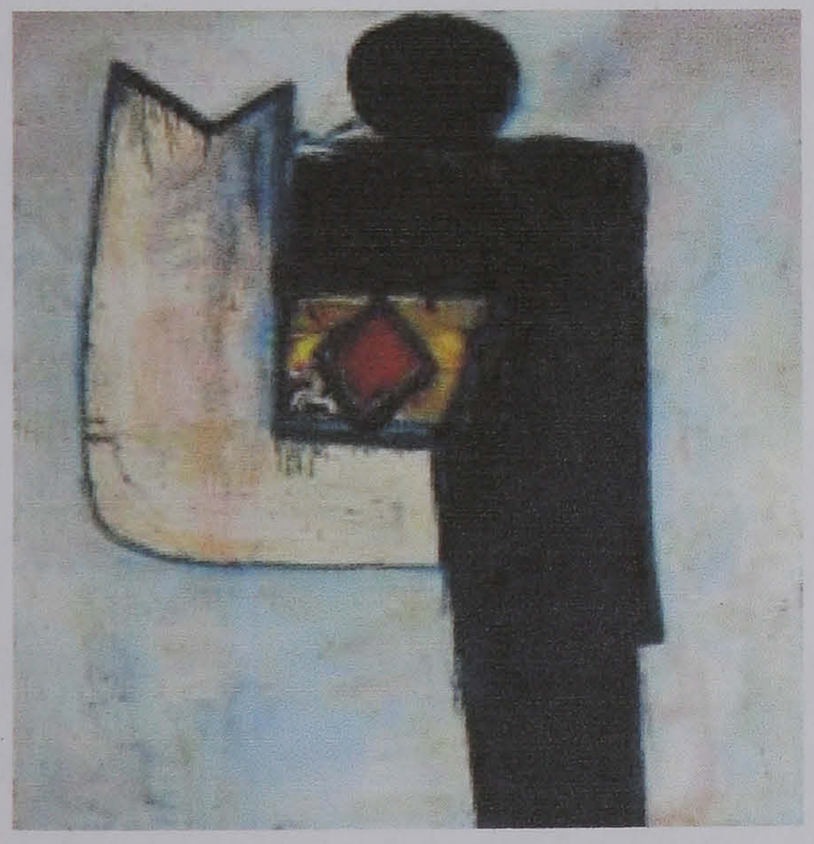


Figure 6.3 Alan Davie 'Image of the Fish God' (1956)

Throughout this process the artist educator is measured about how much contextual and theoretical information to share with participants. She introduces concepts tentatively and if the group respond positively (by voicing their views), she elaborates on her initial statements. Throughout the dialogue she gradually introduces varied theoretical knowledge, sometimes providing information on the context of an artworks' production. One man sees the Richier piece as war represented as a game of chess.

Michaela agrees that it is possible to see the work that way and identifies how current events, such as political instability, alongside our personal histories inevitably shape our readings. Consequently interpretations do not remain stable as circumstances change. When questioned directly, she acknowledges her personal antipathy toward one of the images on show.

The group has now been working together for over an hour and it is apparent that some are tired, as they move away from the group to sit on the seating provided. The artist educator wants them to look at one final piece of work by Bill Viola. 'Five Angels for the Millennium' (2001) is a large installation of five wall-size video projections shown in a completely dark space. Michaela explains this makes it difficult to discuss the work whilst looking at it. Instead she poses a number of questions before participants enter and asks them to reconvene outside in a short while. She does not specify an exact time as she wants each person to experience the work fully for themselves. She asks them to think about what they see, what they hear and to consider how they feel. The group enter the space, some leaving almost immediately as they find it too claustrophobic. The artist educator stays in the space for approximately five minutes before leaving to wait outside. Some participants leave when she does, but others stay for another five minutes or so.

Participants give mixed responses to the work; some find the work very moving and connect it with spiritual or religious themes, even before they see its title. One woman appears pleased to discover the angel reference, as she described the figures in those terms. One man who did not stay long felt confused and overwhelmed. The artist educator agrees it can be a difficult experience being in the space. She asks them how they see this work connecting with other pieces they have looked at; how would they describe 'the body' as depicted by Viola? One participant describes the Viola figures as symbolic of a higher power and that the piece represents judgement day. Others disagree, saying the work does not have such a specific meaning. Participants refer back to ideas of vulnerability and strength they had alluded to in

relation to previous works. The interjections are more sporadic and some group members are already moving away.

The artist educator does not attempt to bring these diverse viewpoints together, which suggests that she too is tired. She informs the group that the session is nearly over. Michaela asks participants to reflect on the works they have looked at and what they have gained from the discussions. Participants thank her and some say they are surprised by how much they have enjoyed themselves. Others are non-committal and one confirms that he still thinks modern art is not for him. She thanks them for their participation. She says she has learnt a great deal from their discussions and urges them to revisit the gallery. The group leader then calls the group together and Michaela leaves them in the gallery and returns to the Education space.

6.3 Analysing the Art into Life session

Having described an Art into Life session I now move on to examine why this specific event provides insights into how and why artists engage with learners at Tate Modern. Previous chapters focus on how the artist educators understand themselves to be 'artists' in terms of their skills and knowledge. What 'knowledge' is has also been interrogated and the view that artists possess 'practical knowledge' (Eraut, 1994) advanced. This 'practical knowledge' is experiential; it emerges through practice in specific, but dynamic contexts. I emphasise these two words because the notion that knowledge is linked to particular scenarios underpins my decision to describe a particular session.

Artists, according to my argument, acquire their knowledge through practice; by 'doing'. They may have significant 'technical knowledge' (*Ibid*, 1994), which here encompasses, for example, art historical information. However, the practical knowledge artist educators utilise in front of artworks derives, I believe, from their position as artists working in the specific context of the gallery. This knowledge is made explicit through their activities. Therefore it is through looking at what artist

educators do (by observing and documenting them in action in the gallery), as well as examining what they say (through interviews) that we can gain a sense of what they know.

By emphasising the words 'dynamic' and 'specific' I also want to draw attention to Michaela's view which was touched on in chapter three. In the group Michaela critiqued my use of aspects of Paulo Friere's critical pedagogy (Friere, 1973) and advocated developing new models by examining and making visible the details of gallery education practice. Michaela also drew my attention to the emergent and specific nature of this form of teaching and learning in the gallery. This prompted me to focus on artist educators' practice, rather than assess whether it conformed or not to a particular education theory.

This in turn led me to consider how theory and practice inform and develop each other; another central theme of this thesis. Rather than bringing education theory to the practice I became aware that theory needed to emerge from my investigation of practice and this methodological approach has been adopted for my thesis. As outlined in chapter three I have taken a 'grounded' approach (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000), wherein theory is recognised as emergent and arising from particular situations. The inclusion of the narrative is intended partly to foreground the experiential character of artist-led pedagogy and to provide a basis from which to provide a theoretical examination that derives from practice.

The descriptive interpretation of the session also presents my sense of what takes place in the gallery. For reasons identified in chapter three, I focus on the artist educators in this thesis and my data collection has not extended to learners. In later chapters I explore the research participants' understanding of their work in the gallery however I consider it important to provide a counterpoint to this in the form of my interpretation of their activities. This is for a number of reasons. First, as my background and experience corresponds closely to those of these artist educators I consider it appropriate to present my picture of what happens. The narrative is titled

a 'descriptive interpretation' because inevitably my own experience of similar teaching and learning experiences has informed my analysis of the sessions.

Second, although I cannot take the place of the learners, I identify myself having a learning role within this thesis partly to gain insights into how collaborative the engagement occurring in gallery education scenarios is. Equally, my aim has been to position myself, as much as possible, alongside research participants, sharing and developing ideas with them. As identified earlier I see parallels between this process of research and teaching and learning in the gallery, but also recognise limits to possible collaboration in the gallery and the research venture. The inclusion of the narrative flags up some issues relating to the challenges to co-learning in the gallery. For example in chapter seven's examination of the artist educators' perceptions of whether or not they teach, I refer back to the narrative where appropriate to contextualise what they say. In this way I hope to provide a more balanced construction of the gallery education experience.

6.4 Why this session was chosen

The gallery education session described is an example of the engagement occurring between artist educators, learners and artworks during the AiL sessions at Tate Modern. However it must be stressed that each session is inherently unique, since the dynamics of the participants (with their particular needs and experiences), their involvement with the artist educator and the environment of the gallery on any given day shapes how a session evolves. So why has this session been chosen?

Having observed several AiL sessions in the gallery and discussed with research participants aspects of each, I chose the workshop with the plumbers because it was, according to Michaela (the artist educator who led it), very 'successful' and highly challenging. She considers it successful because, although participants initially appeared sceptical and wary of her and the collection, as the session progressed they became increasingly involved and responsive. Consequently the dialogue

became more animated, with more people prepared to share and reflect on their ideas, question and develop the ideas of others and build interpretations of different works that were individual to each learner, but also shared by the group. This suggests 'success' is judged in terms of increased individual engagement and involvement with a work and within the group and the generation of personal interpretations that are negotiated through dialogue. It is notable that participants are not expected to 'learn' a particular interpretation of a work, but rather to be able to construct their own understandings. In the following exchange Michaela and I discuss what that process entails, in relation to this session:

> **Michaela (M)**: People find themselves in the situation where they say something about an artwork that almost surprises them. Or they can be made to realise in the context of a group discussion that what they have said is surprising and reveals a whole different set of associations.... So it's that way of externalising things [that] aren't even normally possible to analyse, because it's very difficult to do that to yourself. But if these things emerge in a group... you can actually push them to pursue their thoughts and you can reinforce their thinking by saying 'that interesting because that artist did, blah, blah, blah'. So that you can support that process with information that you know about the artist. But it's actually all about getting the person to analyse what they have said or the feeling that they have had
> **Emily (E)**: I really noticed when I was observing you and the plumbers..
> **M**: (Laughs) What a nightmare that was... hundreds of plumbers! They just kind of trickled in
> **E**: Great phrase! But I mean it was fantastic observing an almost visible change amongst some of them. I mean they would be talking and there would be a kind of realisation as they were engaged in the dialogue
> **M**: Yes, yes
> **E**: Particularly in front of the Euan Uglow
> **M**: Yes that is very true.... and one of the most positive things about the job is when you see that process... it's almost like self-actualisation isn't it? It's like I'm saying something and I'm being listened to and people are responding or building a group response. People just like grow bigger, don't they, visibly under that kind of attention and participation and I find it really exciting.

I include this discussion because Michaela's responses reveal not only what she perceives is happening during a session and how she responds to learners, but also what she values. Her comments also indicate how she judges whether participants are taking in and processing what she is saying. Michaela outlines her approach to

teaching and learning; she encourages people to interrogate their own responses and develop ideas within the context of a group dialogic exchange. It is an approach shared by other research participants and her (and my) perception that this learning process took place during the session with the plumbers, encouraged me to select it for analysis.

The session also exemplifies the techniques adopted by artist educators. The drawing exercise prior to entering the 'Nude/Action/Body' suite of galleries, the use of the photographic prompts and request for two-word summaries are indicative of educators' strategies, as part of the gallery's particular methodology. My third research question ('what function does the particular gallery play in shaping the [artist educators'] pedagogic activities') concerns the influence of the gallery context and at Tate Modern a specific structured approach is advocated (Charman *et al*, 2006). The plumbers' session provides clear examples of how the methodology is manifest in practice, and is returned to in the analysis of pedagogy in chapters seven and eight.

A further reason for selecting this session is exemplified in Michaela's response; 'What a nightmare that was... hundreds of plumbers! They just kind of trickled in'. This suggests that, although rewarding on many levels, the workshop was also difficult on others. This session therefore provides much that I had expected, particularly in terms of the artist educator's approach to facilitating dialogue and promoting individual, experiential responses. But it also revealed some unexpected and productive tensions. For example the size of the group (over twenty) is unusual for AiL sessions, where numbers are typically limited to fifteen. This made sustaining dialogue in the gallery hard. A second challenge was posed by the tutor from the college accompanying the plumbers, who interrupted Michaela and appeared to want to retain her position as group leader. Michaela identifies below why that is problematic for her as the artist educator:

> It's a tricky dynamic with a group leader who is also trying to assert themselves in that way and you have to try and cut that out. Actually that happened with the plumbers and I can't work when those two things are happening at the same time.... there can only be one person who's leading the workshop. Not

> leading in terms of I know everything, I'm the expert, but I'm structuring it for now, just for an hour or two hours.

Michaela's comments raise important issues concerning the respective roles of the artist educator and participants (including the group leader) and the balance of power between them. Michaela considers that she encourages learners to discuss freely within the parameters of the workshop, but she decides what those parameters are. It is the artist educator, she later says in the same interview, who directs the pace of the workshop and the mechanics of working with the group;

> I am the artist in the gallery which means that I can say we are going to be looking at this work and I'm going to give you these little acetates and you are going to go and find something... I'm going to be the person who facilitates this workshop and you've got to trust me in that role.

These disclosures, which suggest the relative power the artist educator compared to the learners, have implications for how we can understand this practice as collaborative. Her comments also indicate the range of roles she occupies, which include facilitator, but also pedagogic expert; constructs that are examined in greater detail in chapters seven and eight.

The participants' characteristics also influenced my choice of this session. The selection of the AiL programme as the site to interrogate artist educator's practice is intended, in part, to allow examination of the notion of 'community' as understood within gallery education and wider social inclusion discourses. In particular this thesis questions the prevailing identification of learners from the 'community' with a position of disadvantage or disengagement, and hence in need of the redemptive support of the gallery. The group of plumbers did not seem to conform to a community who are 'disadvantaged, lack confidence, and lack any sense of feeling that museums have anything to do with their lives' (Dodd, 2001: 132). Instead they exhibited a range of experiences of contemporary art and Tate Modern and could be seen to be part of an alternative definition of 'community,' understood in terms of 'all those networks of relationships through which we derive common meanings, and thus common purposes and identity' (Kelly, 1985:6).

At no point do I wish to undermine or underestimate the work the community education department does with, for example, groups for adults with mental health issues or elders groups. However, my reason for not choosing to focus on a session with such a group is to move beyond, and at the same time, contextualise the aims of a community education programme as understood within the social inclusion agenda. Answering my question regarding what she aimed to get out of the session for her students, the group leader stated that she hoped the session would extend their creative problem solving and critical thinking abilities; skills she considered essential for plumbers. With her comments in mind I chose this session since it does not fit so easily within the policy rhetoric of cultural access. Instead alternative outcomes (which appear relevant to wider creative learning agendas) were sought by participants.

6.4 Summary and conclusion

Building on my earlier construction of the artist and artistic practice, the descriptive interpretation and my reflections on it are intended to illuminate how artist educators engage with learners and artworks in the gallery from a perspective other than the research participants. The session exemplifies many of the artist educators' approaches. However the analysis of research participants' perceptions which follows highlights how their construction of artist-led pedagogy differs in some respects from what I perceive happens in the gallery. The next two chapters draw on this descriptive interpretation to contextualise and critique the research participants' views of themselves as educators and their work in the gallery. I also return to the narrative in the final chapter's examination of how policy rhetoric regarding 'community' education does not necessarily correspond with practice in cultural institutions.

7. Teaching and learning in the gallery: examining the artist educators' pedagogic practice in the context of Tate Modern's education framework

7.1 Introduction

> Give me a fish I eat for a day. Teach me to fish and I'll eat for ever (Chinese proverb quoted in Hein, 1998:31)

This chapter examines the research participants' perceptions of artist-led education activities in the gallery. It begins by considering the context in which these artist educators work. This is to understand how and why Tate Modern's particular education framework and methodology are both informed by art practice and influence how artist-led pedagogy operates within its philosophical and pedagogic boundaries. Later sections of the chapter examine and problematise research participants' perceptions of the artist educators' strategies and techniques. The analysis interrogates whether these artist educators' approaches derive from their construction of themselves as artists and considers how their teaching fits with the aims of the community education programme in terms of knowledge generated. A vital differentiation is made between transmitting a particular interpretation to learners (which equates to 'the fish' in the quotation above) and providing learners with the skills and confidence to develop their own meanings (or teaching them to fish in this analogy).

A prevailing concern within this thesis is the recognition of, and engagement with, the complexity of art practice and processes of teaching and learning. Connections have been made between these practices throughout the thesis where appropriate. The same is true in this chapter; complexity and interconnectedness are foregrounded. In particular the engagement between artist educators, learners and artworks, within the context of the gallery, emerges as convoluted and nuanced. This chapter attempts to represent the subtlety and intricacy of these activities by analysing details of the

practice, acknowledging different voices and making connections between various theoretical models and concepts. In doing so, this chapter and the one following address the second and third research questions in the thesis. Together they examine how artist educators perceive they function as educators in the context of the community education programme and how the gallery shapes these pedagogic activities.

7.2 Understanding the context and development of Tate Modern's education methodology

Locating this thesis within Tate Modern enables me to examine selected artist educators' approaches to their practice within a specific pedagogic framework. The gallery's education methodology and philosophy for its schools and community programme is well articulated. It has been developed, refined and reflected on by individuals from within the organisation (Charman & Ross, 2005, Cox, 2006, Fuirer, 2005, Jackson, & Meecham, 1999, Jackson, 2000a, Plant, 1992). From what they say in the interviews, it is apparent that Tate Modern's sanctioned methodology informs the artist educators' pedagogic practice, although they also question and critique it. Interrogating the 'Tate method' gives insights into whether it is this approach, in addition to (or rather than) their status as artists, which most strongly defines practice in the gallery. The analysis also illuminates whether the Tate method itself corresponds with a model of artistic practice and hence whether it relies on gallery educators being familiar with an 'artistic' approach to learning.

This strand of Tate Modern's pedagogic approach was originally developed at Tate Liverpool in the late 1980s. The method rests on theoretical approaches to works of art and cultural institutions, which are outlined in chapter two. These include shifts in the relationship between viewer and artwork and reappraisals of the gallery as a cultural institution. Tim, the education curator at Tate Modern, acknowledges the impact of these conceptual developments on gallery education practice, but also

identifies artists' actions and changing approaches to learning and teaching as being influential:

> [Tate methodology came from] artists and their critique of the institutions that display art and the infrastructure that supports it.... And also all those shifts and changes in art history and theory that... drew out different ways of thinking about art which challenged the notion of the authoritative voice of any commentator as it were.... The other thing was shifts in pedagogy; [in] learning methods away from the typical classroom teacher, whole class teaching, [to] the idea of using small group techniques; using techniques outside of formal education that you'd find in other kinds of learning. So you get small group, interactive, task based, much more ludic... You'd see it in earlier forms of primary education. You'd see it in some of the theories of play, for example learning through play.... And the idea that it was heuristic, in other words that it was based on experience, rather than based upon learning bits of knowledge.

Pedagogy in the gallery, according to this education curator, was informed by ideas from a range of fields. These different approaches were adapted and expanded upon by Tate's education team and formulated into a coherent method that continues to underpin practice in the gallery. Suggested in this quotation is the organic development of the practice, wherein different ideas were brought together. The emphasis on a heuristic approach highlights learning through doing; the focus on play reveals the centrality of experimentation.

Revisiting the Art Making Model in chapter five exposes broad similarities between Tim's perception of how Tate method developed and the art process as described there. In particular co-opting concepts from a range of disciplines to suit the purposes of the practitioner and an experiential, trial and error approach are identified as characteristics of art making in the model. Potentially, these concepts link the artistic process with teaching and learning in the gallery as positioned by those developing Tate's education programme. But Tim does not say that artistic practice shapes the model. What he does acknowledge later in the same interview is that he sees similarities between Tate's approach to learning and how artists work in broad terms:

> I think that the nature of being an artist and making artworks and the whole idea of not knowing what the outcome is going to be, but being involved in a process is very, very close to what we do here. That we are on a journey, on a

> process where we might have some inkling of where we are beginning or the stuff that is around us but we might not know where it is leading to and at a certain stage we recognise when we have achieved something and we consolidate it or we recognise when we haven't and we cast it out.

Describing pedagogy in the gallery as he sees it, Tim emphasises process and acknowledges connections to art practice. These similarities have been noted by other gallery education practitioners, notably Burnham & Kai Kee (2005) who identify museum 'teaching' as a creative practice, 'an art form' in its own right (*Ibid,* 2005: 66). Specifically, it is Tim's suggestion of an open-ended journey, punctuated by moments when meanings are actualised, that appear to resemble the art process as described in the Art Making Model. These connections are explored in greater detail below.

Whereas Tim does not say that artistic practice defines the Tate methodology, David, another education curator, sees closer connections between art making and this approach to teaching and learning. He argues that the affiliation results in learners being positioned in a particular way:

> The interesting thing... in terms of the structure of all the [education] programmes here is that...in my experience a lot of the talks that are supposedly aimed at a general audience are actually talks that... use an art school discourse, an art school approach to things. So it's actually not talking about art the way that reviews in The Guardian talk about art.. [but] it's only more accessible, say, because it's addressing people as if they were making the art themselves; as if they were practitioners themselves.

David makes a broad statement about education here. Yet his use of the term 'talks', suggests he has a particular conception of what form pedagogy in the gallery might take, which is at odds with the more collaborative, less didactic approaches of the artist-led gallery sessions. Nonetheless David seems to be arguing that Tate's approach to learning foregrounds art practice (as defined in chapter one as the activity undertaken by art practitioners), rather than academic, critical or art historical approaches. In his mind, art practice informs the education programme at the gallery, and also represents what learners are being encouraged to engage with, rather than the kind of information presented in a newspaper review, for example.

This is evident in David's subsequent comments, when he responds to my asking him to define what he sees as 'the art school approach':

> I think it's quite subjective...people are making judgments about individual works of art, or individual bodies of work, thinking... is this good? Does this interest me as art? Rather than thinking about how does this relate to other things going on in the world, other aspects of the culture. I mean one of the overriding questions that more academically-minded people put to themselves is what is the relationship between this art and politics and the art school discourse doesn't feel it has to do that.

These comments suggest David perceives those trained within art schools (artists) as having a subjective, introspective approach to interpreting art. This view is contradicted by Toby Jackson (1999) who argues that art students on 'good BA courses' (Jackson & Meecham, 1999: 94) are expected to locate their practice within broader theoretical discourses. Nonetheless, David's views appear to correlate with how the artist educators (particularly Michaela) describe their approach (as artists rather than artist educators) to looking at work (see chapter four). His comments also resonate with the argument advanced in that earlier chapter that artists, as practitioners, acquire and develop propositional knowledge as and when it becomes useful for the development of their practice, rather than to connect with wider art historical discourses or to build upon or demonstrate their erudition.

Relevant also is Liz Ellis' acknowledgement in her published paper that the methods she adopts when working with a mental health organization in the gallery correspond exactly with those she employs with fine art students at any college (Ellis, 2005). Arguably, therefore strands of Tate Modern's approach to teaching and learning resemble artists' own learning strategies, at art school and subsequently. This appears to confirm David's assumption that the education programme locates learners as art practitioners and that, in his view, this positioning serves to exclude broader cultural discourses from learners' interpretations.

Yet as described in the previous chapter's narrative, more typically artist educators draw attention to the relationship between art and wider theoretical discourses (one example being the discussion referred to on the definition of 'abstract' art in the

narrative) when working with learners. However, this contextualising of the artwork is perceived by artist educators to be part of the process of enabling learners to develop more informed, but still personal interpretations, based on their experience of a work. As is examined below, facilitating this process of knowledge building and meaning making is an intrinsic element of the community programme's remit to encourage learners to engage with the collection.

Therefore, David's comments can be seen to reflect his perceptions of how interpretations are developed, but also for what reason. David considers that constructing an interpretation grounded on personal experience differs from considering a work in relation to political theory, for example. For him there is an alternative epistemological rationale at work. His use of the phrase 'more academically-minded people' suggests he separates knowledge developed by such thinkers from that constructed by artists. In other words he differentiates between academics and practitioners. This echoes Scott *et al's* (2004) classification of practical and theoretical (or propositional) knowledge in workplace and academic cultures outlined in chapter four.

Scott *et al* argue that this differentiation of knowledge is hierarchical, with the propositional knowledge (more 'objective' and 'value free') developed by academics typically positioned as superior to practitioner knowledge, which is inferior due to its 'subjectivity' and perceived lack of epistemological authority. Scott *et al*'s argument illuminates why knowledge generated during community education sessions might be problematic to someone such as David. He appears to deem the experiential, context-specific and personal knowledge generated by artists and learners in an Art into Life session less valid than the potentially more generalisable knowledge emerging from an 'academic' debate.

Whilst resisting the epistemological hierarchy David appears to subscribe to, his comments highlight tensions associated with the pedagogic model adopted within the community education programme and some possible limits to its application. In

particular his critique of experiential and personal knowledge suggests that in education scenarios seeking to engage with and generate more theoretical knowledge, this model would not be inappropriate. Moreover, David's comments have implications for how artist educators and their practice are positioned within Tate Modern. I therefore reexamine his perceptions in the following two chapters.

7.3 Tate Modern's 'Ways In' interpretive framework

In chapter one, gallery education is identified as enabling visitors to engage with art and the art institution. Corresponding with this rationale, at Tate Modern the community education programme aims to enable use and enjoyment of the gallery, particularly by those new to galleries and modern art (Cox & Keizer, 2003). Connections can be made to Tate Liverpool's original outreach programme which sought to develop pro-active community relations and to 'facilitate connections, between the gallery, twentieth century art and [people's] own lives' (Plant, 1992: 13). Such initiatives therefore address these galleries' broader remit to encourage new visitors and widen their audiences (Cox, 2006, Ellis, 2005, Jackson, 1999, Plant, 1992).

Widening participation and developing individual's cultural confidence comes through relating art to visitors' experiences (Jackson & Meecham, 1999). Specifically greater involvement is engendered through developing learners' meaning making abilities and hence enabling them to gain understandings relevant to their lives. Absent in the discourse surrounding Tate Modern's community education programme therefore is any overt didactic agenda for community education; these programmes are not described in terms of instructing people about art, but rather enabling them to connect with art. Also noticeable is the lack of rhetoric around social inclusion; the community education programme does not seek to ameliorate participants' social or educational circumstances. Toby Jackson, explained what he was aiming for, when he said:

> This feeling of alienation [felt by people toward galleries showing twentieth century art] can be overcome by a method of learning which employs testing the translation of the art object against the viewers' past experience and by

> discovering, through guided trial and error, a range of readings of an art work... if this is successful visitors will see the cultural artifacts and the institutions that show them as places of value to them. (Jackson & Meecham, 1999: 91)

Education, as Jackson sees it, enables visitors to see the relevance of the gallery and art within it to their lives. Arguably such an experience might also demonstrate to visitors that art is not relevant, as demonstrated by the mixed responses by the plumbers described in chapter six. Nonetheless, according to Toby Jackson, this connectivity is achieved through modes of learning, but also through 'guided' facilitation. The word 'guided' is significant as, although Jackson emphasizes learning, I understand the 'Ways In' framework to be as much to do with forms of teaching in the gallery as it is with learning.

7.3.1 The focus on learner-centred pedagogy

Tate Modern's Ways In method, which extends to its schools and community education programmes, has been described as 'learner-centred' and 'activity based' (Charman *et al,* 2006: 52). A learner-centred approach, which draws on the principles of constructivist learning theory (see chapter one), is increasingly recognised within museum and gallery education practice (Hein, 2003, Hooper-Greenhill, 2003). Here I consider how it is manifest in practice and the extent of its application first within galleries more widely and second within the community programme at Tate Modern.

Learners and their experiences are foregrounded in several texts addressing education in cultural spaces. Burnham & Kai-Kee (2005) identify that museum education enables visitors to engage with art 'on a personal level' (*Ibid*, 2005: 74) in order to gain understanding. Similarly Xanthoudaki (1997) argues that the unique learning experience in the gallery is due to the interaction between the learner's prior knowledge and experience, motivation, attitudes, cultural background and the information conveyed in an artwork. Allen & Clive (1995) likewise position gallery education as having a responsibility to draw the learners' experience and knowledge

to the attention of the institution. These writers appear to support Hein's (2003) argument that gallery education needs to focus on the learner's motivation and experience, rather than the content of the institution. Hence effective learning scenarios allow visitors 'to draw their own conclusions about the meaning of the exhibition' (*Ibid*, 2003: 76).

However other writers on gallery education place greater emphasis on the teaching of interpretive skills over personal engagement. For Elkins (2001) 'aesthetic education', which he sees as teaching people to appreciate art, is evident in American education practice. Likewise Zeller (1989) stresses that the teaching of art history, art criticism and aesthetics enables learners to engage with artworks and is central to good education practice in American galleries. One such gallery, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, drew on the 'aesthetic stage theory' (Housen, 1987) to develop a formal and prescriptive education programme which aimed to 'teach students and teachers the skills necessary to derive meaning from looking at modern art: 'visual literacy'' (MOMA papers, 1992: 2). These skills are categorized by Housen as; observational skills, analytical skills, deductive reasoning, creative expression, individual and group communication skills and historical knowledge and derive from looking and responding critically to works of art (*Ibid*, 1992).

The model of gallery education described by Zeller, Elkins and evident at MoMA emphasizes teaching rather than learning. For this reason it provides a useful comparison to Tate, where learner experience is ostensibly foregrounded. Yet, as is examined below, the research participants acknowledge that a primary task for the educators at Tate is providing learners with 'tools for looking', which embrace observation, analysis and reflection. Also later in this chapter I address how the structure of the Art into Life programme encourages learners to articulate their views within a group, whilst providing relevant factual knowledge to support them in building their interpretations. Each of these activities – observing, analyzing, reasoning, expressing ideas within a group and acquiring knowledge - correspond with the skills identified in the MoMA model. This suggests that although the Tate method may be

committed to a learner-centred approach and eschews the inflexibility and formality of the 'aesthetic stage theory', the degree of teaching involved cannot be disregarded. Instead what emerges in the analysis of practice is a complex balance of facilitation, teaching and co-learning that artist educators undertake.

Further complications arise from the artist educators' negotiation between learners and artworks. As the evidence from the interviews and the previous chapter's narrative suggests, within artist-led pedagogy the (albeit fluid and provisional) content of art is acknowledged. Yet this would appear to contradict Hein's assertion that learner-centred pedagogy needs to foreground participant experience over content. Interrogating how artist educators negotiate tensions between learners' conceptions and the content of artworks is crucial to understanding the meaning making journey in the gallery.

Therefore, whilst acknowledging that community education sessions are informed by a learner-centred philosophy, it is valuable to problematise the Tate method as defined exclusively by a constructivist model. In doing so I examine alternative pedagogic models, including those relating to co-constructivism, transmission and critical pedagogy (as outlined in chapter one). In the following chapter I also examine how issues such as power sharing, meaning making and course content are positioned by the interviewees to ascertain how these perceptions correspond with learner-centred pedagogy. Finally in chapter nine I broaden my analysis to consider whether teaching and learning at Tate Modern can be understood to be learning-centred as well as learner-centred.

7.3.2 Considering construction and co-construction in relation to the Tate framework

The Tate Modern 'Ways In' method encompasses a series of frameworks for engaging with visual art in the gallery. Each of the four frameworks ('a personal approach', 'ways into the object', 'ways into the subject', 'ways into the context' (Charman *et al,* 2006)) recognise the plural nature of interpretation, but also provides

a structure on which to develop ideas. The frameworks set out questions which are intended to provoke thinking and generate discussion. Questioning underpins the learning process, providing a means of identifying issues that are addressed, if not resolved, through investigation and interpretation.

The 'Ways In' method makes certain assumptions about learners and artworks. The 'personal approach' positions learners as active makers of meaning, not passive recipients of expert knowledge. As noted above, it presupposes that constructivist learning takes place in the gallery. In this way the framework can be distanced from models of learning emphasizing the transmission of factual knowledge or skills, such as a lecture. Here Michèle Fuirer suggests why the approach adopted during Art into Life sessions differs from methods adopted during traditional gallery talks:

> The voluntary guides who give the public tours do the whole spiel.... they deliver the whole thing in terms of 'this is what you can see, can't you?' And when I hear them doing it it's almost like someone has put a wound in me... You can't tell people what to see and give them a story about how Picasso went to such and such a place and decided to paint Cubism! You can't do that!' So there are these very definite protocols that we have established.

The tours, according to Michèle, evidence a 'banking' (Friere, 1970) or 'reception' (Watkins, 2003) model of learning wherein a fixed body of knowledge is deposited in the passive learner. Her criticisms of this approach, which 'tells' people what to see and leaves no space for individual interpretation, reveal her resistance to didactic teaching which is examined further below. As an artist educator Michèle does not see her role as determining meaning for learners and instead prioritizes learners' active processes of making meaning, as she identifies in her own text:

> This approach could be termed Constructivist, in that the learners are constructing knowledge for themselves, both individually and as part of a group and in this way learning is not divorced from personal meaning making or life experience. A feature of this model of acquiring knowledge is that, in rejecting didactic teaching, or transmission in a linear fashion from teacher to learner, the learner enjoys a heuristic engagement that takes them into discovery and self-motivation. (Fuirer, 2005: 4)

The rationale for adopting the constructivist approach is seen by Michèle as twofold; it enables learners to draw on their experiences and to actively investigate as part of a group. Learning becomes a process of enquiry and the learner an investigator. As Michèle describes it, constructivist learning in the gallery resembles the art process as enquiry-based and the understanding of the artist as a 'conceptual investigator'. Equally Michèle's perception of learners as self-motivated echoes the construction of people as actively engaged in developing culture found within community arts practice. What occupies me here is the shared focus on active meaning making by individuals.

Yet in addition to constructing learners as individual makers of meaning, the Tate method advocates small group work and more interactive, collaborative forms of learning. Indeed the 'Ways In' framework assumes that purely personal responses need to be questioned and expanded through the exchange of ideas with others. Equally it recognises that plural interpretations and stimulating dialogue is integral, since it allows for different ideas to be voiced and developed within the group (Charman *et al,* 2006). Therefore, typically, community education workshops encompass smaller groups of learners (the gallery suggests a maximum of fifteen participants, but as the narrative in the previous chapter shows, this is not always the case). This format is intended to foster 'a community of enquiry, in which discussion and debate are integral and each person's ideas are equally significant' (*Ibid*, 2006: 57).

The focus on dialogue suggests a shift toward acknowledging that learning can be a shared enterprise, where learners work together taking responsibility for generating knowledge. Therefore, although not formally identified within the literature on the Tate method, it appears that more co-constructive modes of learning are aspired to.

Liz Ellis recognises the value of dialogue, as characteristic of co-constructive learning, in her practice:

> I think [the] co-constructivist model.. that method of learning is nice and dialogue is so important, sharing, arguing, disagreeing about what you see.

Identifying that dialogue and sharing knowledge is a crucial element of learning, Liz supports co-constructivism. Similarly, although Lucy Wilson does not cite 'co-construction', she values how learners are encouraged to direct their learning through 'peer-led discussion', rather than relying on artist educators to instigate and manage conversations. Moreover Michèle, Michaela and Esther also describe how group dialogue and negotiated meaning making are integral to the interpretive process.

The research participants' focus on shared forms of learning suggests that co-constructivist learning takes place during community education sessions. Yet, as is examined in the following chapter, co-construction is predicated on more than group discussion. Issues including the relative authority of teacher and learner and the length of time group members spend developing shared activities shape whether participants do, in reality, take responsibility for their learning. Furthermore, although the Tate Method is defined as 'learner-centred', arguably the approach taken within Art into Life sessions derives as much from the teaching methods adopted by artist educators and the status of the artwork, as the needs of learners. These issues are considered in the following sections.

7.3.3 The issue of 'teaching' in the gallery

Specific constructions of learning and teaching are evident in the literature connected to gallery education at Tate. For instance, in the Tate Art Gallery Handbook (Charman *et al*, 2006) the methodology is identified as 'learner centred', yet interpretations are developed through 'expanding on personal responses and building up new habits of looking at art through a programme of activity-centred teaching in the gallery' (*Ibid*, 2006: 57 (my emphasis)). This echoes Toby Jackson's assertion noted above that people's initial responses to an art object are developed through guided facilitation. Both comments imply an active role for the artist educator, but one that does not include instruction.

Other literature relating to the community education programme reiterates the centrality of constructivist learning and typically avoids positioning the artist as teacher. Here the artist educator's function is to facilitate. In a published text, Alison Cox (2006) describes the artist educator as a 'guide to discussion, building on individual's responses, rather than as the deliverer of expert opinion or historical facts' (*Ibid*, 2006: 4). Michèle Fuirer's (2005) text also describes participants learning through discovery and self motivation, since knowledge is not transferred linearly from the teacher in the gallery. However, Fuirer also recognizes how artist educators 'foster' connections between artworks and learners, accommodate different responses and arrive 'at concrete outcomes from a mutable process' (*Ibid,* 2005: 7). This 'fostering' is examined below, since the interview data and my observations indicate artist educators are more active in determining how and what is learnt during sessions than the literature above might suggest.

What I am interrogating, therefore, is whether artist educators are 'teaching' learners and what form that engagement might take. This stems partly from my interest in research participants' perceptions of art practice and teaching and learning and whether they construct each as parallel forms of active meaning making. When conducting individual interviews I asked 'What do you consider that you are 'teaching' participants within the gallery?' and 'How do you consider that you are 'teaching' participants within the gallery?' I highlighted the word 'teaching' as I needed to interrogate whether interviewees considered this is what they were doing. Artist educators had mixed responses. Esther felt relatively comfortable with the idea of teaching, because she was aware of how much students were learning, whereas Michèle was adamant she was not teaching:

Michèle (M): I can't get on with the word teaching. Even seeing you write it in inverted commas I have this little thing inside me that goes 'No, not teaching'
Emily (E): Why? Because of that whole idea of didactic…
M: Yes that definition of teaching.... I'll say anything rather than teaching because I have a complete aversion to the notion that what I do is teaching.
E: So how would you?
M: I'm probably defining it very narrowly. But facilitating, mediating, enabling. I'm not even sure about enabling, that might be going a bit far. I am fairly happy with facilitating learning. So I am some kind of facilitator. I suppose

> there is 'animateur' that term that French people use for teachers..... Also I don't want it to be anything to do with school or pedagogy in that sense of formulaic models of pedagogy. I want it to be that thing as you described; throwing things in the air, opening the box, and all those lovely, juicy little concepts that gallery educators love to wave around.

Michèle's comments illuminate her perceptions of teaching more broadly as well as her activities in the gallery. She associates 'teaching' exclusively with the transmission model, which in her mind is connected negatively to pedagogy in schools. This in turn indicates her somewhat reductive understanding of school pedagogy as rigid and, in contrast to gallery education practice, uncreative and confining.

Although not voiced as strongly as Michèle, Michaela also conjoins teaching with the transmission of factual knowledge. As she says:

> **Michaela (M)**: I think if I do a lot of teaching in a session, it feels like I've failed...
> **Emily (E)**: So what do you understand by the term teaching?
> **M**: If I'm giving a lot of information.

Both Michaela and Michèle seek to avoid instructing learners, instead preferring a role they see allowing more open ended learning. It appears these artist educators resist 'teaching' in the gallery. However as is noted below (and emerges in the narrative and analysis in the next chapter) artist educators do direct participants' learning and transmit knowledge during sessions.

Whilst undertaking previous research I have noted that this perception of teaching is held commonly by art practitioners working in educational contexts (Pringle, 2003). These other artists share an aversion to the term 'teaching', since they associate it with didactic forms of instruction. They see themselves as mediators or facilitators of others' learning. Yet in education practice more broadly there has been a move toward recognising that teaching involves more than the delivery of knowledge by teacher to students (Watkins, 2003). Instead positioning learners as active constructors of meaning encourages a framing of the educator as nurturing those learners and increasing their disposition to learn through a range of strategies (*Ibid*,

2003). This broader view of teaching is one I concur with and my use of the term in this thesis reflects the active and diverse role teachers play whilst stimulating learners in all settings.

In reclaiming 'teaching' I am also seeking to differentiate it from a specific notion of facilitation. Within constructivist pedagogic models the educator is typically seen more as a facilitator who focuses on 'finding out each learner's abilities, skills and interests' (Carnell & Lodge, 2002: 13). Artist educators appear comfortable with this construction, yet I have concerns over this positioning. First, notwithstanding the artist educators' views, I consider it important to acknowledge the direct involvement of the artist in the pedagogic process. Second, whilst acknowledging the desire to move beyond the transmission model and the teacher as a 'teller, organizer, judge' (Watkins, 2005), I consider that locating the educator wholly as facilitator risks simplifying the multi-layered interchange between themselves, artworks and learners.

The view that 'facilitator' is an insufficient descriptor is shared by Godfrey (1996) who sees the construction of artists as facilitators coming from discourses that locate art exclusively as a recreational or therapeutic pursuit, centered on self-expression and which exclude conceptions of art as a conceptual practice. She is particularly critical of the failure to acknowledge 'the integrity and specialism of the artist's own practice' (*Ibid*, 1996:2) and the specific skills and knowledge that artists bring to education scenarios. Previous chapters of this thesis address what skills and knowledge can be ascribed to artists and I share Godfrey's concern that locating artist educators as facilitators risks underestimating artistic expertise.

Furthermore, whilst 'facilitation' has connotations of 'making easy' (Sykes, 1979: 371) pedagogy in the gallery is complicated and involves the rigorous interrogation of artworks. Whereas the broader view of teaching referenced above locates the teacher as active, the artist as facilitator suggests a more passive role. Therefore, I see it as constructive to examine what part all forms of engagement, including

instruction, play in the overall process of meaning making. For instance the artist educators' choice of language reveals they actively guide learners during sessions at times. At one stage Michèle describes her role:

> I think it's very multi-layered, it's to make them look, make! It's to encourage them to engage with the artwork.

Michèle repeats 'make' and substitutes 'encourage', not because she wants to imply that the artist educator must force learners to look, but because she is aware of the subtleties involved in any form of pedagogy that aspires (as the community programme does) to be less directive. She recognises that 'make' is an inappropriate word. Yet her inadvertent use of 'make' also suggests that her role is more than just facilitative. Examples of how an artist educator structures learners' engagement are found in the narrative; from determining how long learners spend looking at works, to the specific contextual information provided. From what the artist educators say and my observations of the practice I conclude, therefore, that facilitation (as Carnell and Lodge (2002) see it above) forms only part of the teaching process in the gallery.

7.4 An analysis of the 'tools for looking'

I return now to the research participants' responses to the questions regarding what and how they 'teach'. Although others did not resist 'teaching' as strongly as Michèle, each concurred with her view that their primary task was to 'enable' people to connect with artworks in the gallery. Each perceives they accomplish this by providing learners with the means to access work. Liz, Michèle, Lucy and Tim the educator curator refer to these means of access as 'tools for looking', whereas Michaela describes them as 'strategies for interrogation'. Esther describes it more in terms of problem solving. Common to all is an emphasis on processes and methods of interpretation rather than the transfer of theoretical or art historical knowledge.

For example, Lucy describes herself as providing learners with the necessary 'tools for looking' within supportive environments:

> It's also... to give them the confidence to be able to express their own opinions and to do that they need to have some tools for looking. But you are not just teaching them tools for looking; you are giving them those tools in order for them to express themselves. That's the conclusion of the tools.

Her comments evidence what Lucy perceives she is doing in the gallery and what she is aiming to achieve. She uses the terms 'giving', and 'teaching', suggesting a mixed approach to pedagogy. Lucy also indicates that the purpose (what she describes as 'conclusion') of the tools is to enable learners to articulate their ideas. It is the development of learners' interpretive skills and confidence she is aiming for.

But what are these 'tools for looking'? Reading through the interview transcripts I was aware I never asked the interviewees to define what they meant by this phrase. I ascribe my oversight to having worked in the field myself. I felt very familiar with the approach and did not need to have it explained. It is revealing also, however, that the interviewees did not think it necessary to deconstruct the term. For them it appears to be a useful shorthand way of understanding and communicating their practice in the gallery and, as such, does not need interrogating.

On beginning this analysis I assumed the 'tools for looking' corresponded to the 'Ways In' framework and that research participants were simply referring to Tate methodology. However having examined the issue it appears more involved, since the artist educators' own experiences and approaches to interpreting work inform their understanding of this concept. For these reasons, I now spend time examining what 'tools for looking' might mean in this context.

The phrase 'tools for looking' prioritises the visual. It suggests that meaning is made through studying the look of a visual object and, in order for learners to access that meaning they must have (or develop) the necessary skills. Therefore the emphasis, as Liz says, is on engaging learners with 'how to look'. In this respect the approach connects with ideas advanced within the field known as 'visual culture' (Mirzoeff, 1998). Visual culture is a wide-reaching area of study, although the term itself is contested (Rose, 2001). It has been described as a 'tactic, rather than an academic

discipline' (*Op cit*, 1998: 11) that is concerned with the interpretation of visual media. In this respect visual culture may help to provide a model for the approach taken by artist educators in the gallery, most notably because it can be seen as a mode of investigation rather than a specific discipline.

Visual culture can be understood as an area within broader cultural studies that addresses the significance and unique effects of the visual (O*p cit*, 2001). Broadly recognised themes within visual culture include first, that visual images produce specific effects and locate the viewer and the image in a particular relationship (Berger, 1972). The second is that the act of looking involves more than the passive reception of visual information, but rather the active decoding of images (Rogoff, 1998). The third is that competences are required for a visually literate person to interpret images and hence make meaning (O*p cit*, 2001). These ideas have informed the development of education practice within Tate (Charman *et al,* 2006, Jackson & Meecham, 1999).

The notion of a 'visually literate' individual alluded to above connects with the concept of 'visual literacy'. Visual literacy, which as Raney (1998) notes is another contested term, has become associated in a general way with the ability to 'make sense of the visual environment' (Mitchell interviewed in Raney, 2003: 43). In different fields it has different associations. In art education visual literacy has become associated with the relationship between critical and contextual studies and the making of art, whereas within media studies the emphasis is on enabling people to deconstruct images in order to develop their own interpretations (*Op cit*, 1998).

What occupies me here is visual literacy's construction within media studies, not least because Michèle makes a clear connection between this approach and Tate's method:

> The BFI [British Film Institute]…produced media education for primary and secondary [schools]; good quality teaching materials to spread the word about deconstructing media. And I always remember in Building Sites which was the community photography project there was this little grid and it was…. basically

> asking a question of a photograph – what, who, why, where, context. Just a list of questions that you put against an image to start... Although that is a very reductive sense of what the theory behind media studies was, but [I remember] going to the Tate and working with their methodology and seeing how that gets written down in the teacher's kit and thinking 'I know what this is'.

Michèle's reference to the community photography project is a timely reminder of the ideas of cultural democracy associated with community arts that are addressed in chapter one. In particular, community arts practice interrogated who and what determines 'art' and encouraged 'non-artists' to actively participate in both the deconstruction and creation of culture. As found within the BFI teaching materials Michèle cites here, this participatory process is centred on questioning. The 'Ways In' method at Tate also considers that through questioning the image, the learner begins building their interpretation. Therefore, although within visual culture and the artist educators' practice the emphasis is on the visual, this form of looking includes more than the act of seeing; it also involves deconstructing and making.

The focus on questioning the image and its contexts suggests a move away from formalist interpretations that address the formal qualities of a work exclusively and therefore separate the meaning of art from the socio-cultural conditions of its production and reception (Harris, 2006). In Tate Modern, learners are being asked to pay close attention to artworks; to question and interrogate how, why and for what reasons they have been made. In this respect they are being given tools for interpretation and meaning making, centred on the act of looking.

The need for prolonged and concentrated looking combined with analysing and reflecting, is acknowledged by artist educators and other gallery education practitioners. Liz emphasises the importance of encouraging learners to take time, when she says:

> So I am teaching people how to slow down. Perhaps pushing them not just to consume to move on, but notice and reflect on what they see and feel and begin to process it.

The term 'teaching' is employed here, but not in relation to transmitting knowledge. Instead the artist educator is steering learners to adopt an approach to artworks, which allows them to move from recognition to interpretation and encourages visual and intellectual interpretive processes to happen. Liz perceives that time allows people to engage more fully with the artwork and their responses. Burnham & Kai Kee (2005) also identify that 'seeing is more than mere looking; looking is more than a casual glance' (*Ibid* 2005: 67) and that time is needed for learners to experience art. Likewise Lachapelle *et al* (2003) identify that learners need to take time to 'really see [a work] and respond to it' (*Ibid* 2003: 84). Engagement with art is here positioned as an experiential, analytical and reflective process, which originates from looking and generates new meaning. This corresponds in many ways with the art making process as described in chapter five.

The interviewees' use of 'tools' suggests pragmatism, or possibly a rather mechanistic approach. This language echoes that found within outcomes-driven evaluation frameworks, such as the Generic Learning Outcomes models (GLOs) described in chapter one. Furthermore, the issue arises as to whether learners are being trained in particular, and potentially rather rigid, methods of interpretation akin to the 'Discipline-Based' arts education (DBAE) model developed by the Getty Education Institute in America (Dobbs, 1992). This approach constructs art interpretation according to four disciplines: aesthetics, art criticism, art history and art production and tends to be associated with codified interpretive formats and more structured curricula. However, I do not interpret the artist educators' use of 'tools' in this way. Rather I see parallels between this concept of 'tools for looking' and the 'knowledge of strategies' idea outlined by Michaela in chapter four. As such it occupies a crucial link between the artist educators' understanding of their knowledge and skills and what they aim to facilitate in learners.

As outlined in chapter four, these artist educators perceive that, as artists they possess 'practical knowledge'; they are knowledgeable about negotiating investigative processes in order to articulate their ideas. Despite possessing

theoretical knowledge, the interviewees do not define themselves according to it, but rather how they use that knowledge. In the gallery artist educators do not aim to tell learners about artworks; they want learners to have sufficient knowledge of the 'strategies for interrogation', as Michaela defines the process, to be able to make meaning independently. Therefore when artist educators refer to 'tools for looking', they are describing how to provide learners with skills, knowledge and confidence to be able to undertake interpretations for themselves.

To achieve this sharing of practical knowledge, artist educators draw on their own practitioner know-how. Chapter five's analysis of the Art Making Model outlines an artistic process. It includes questioning, problem setting, experimentation, accessing information from different sources, reflecting and revising. Evidence from the interviews and my observations indicate that artist educators adopt a similar approach to teaching in the gallery; relying on building up interpretations through asking questions and experimenting with ideas until some form of resolution is achieved. This process is described in the narrative in the previous chapter and is examined in detail in the following chapter. However, in the following section I consider research participants' perceptions of how art practice shapes their interaction with artworks in the gallery.

7.5 Examining how artist educators' pedagogy is informed by their approaches to art practice

Earlier in this chapter I outlined how Tate education curators, Tim and David, perceived parallels between the pedagogy adopted within education sessions in the gallery and art practice. This approach, according to David, privileges the art making process and positions the learner 'as if they were practitioners themselves'. David appears critical of this method, yet evidence from the interview data suggests the artist educators' interpretive strategies recognise and possibly foreground the art making process unashamedly and locate learners as active and experiential makers of meaning. Examination of the artist educators' comments reveals why this

approach is seen by these interviewees to correspond to modes of working they are comfortable adopting.

In the first instance these artist educators interrogate processes of production with learners, since it is a tactic they are familiar with as artists. This perception is voiced by the education curators, with Tim, for instance, acknowledging that artist educators have 'that kind of knowledge of the practice and practical process'. Likewise Joleen Keizer argues that artists deconstruct artworks with learners in particular ways because of their own experience of the art process. As she says:

> Going through all these different processes themselves as artists and being able to deconstruct a work of art and then build it up again, but then doing it with people who come into the gallery for the first time.... It's something about the fact that they [artists] go through the process themselves... starting off from somewhere down here and building up from there, rather than the other way round.

Artists, Joleen considers, are familiar with an experiential and constructive process and therefore 'build up' interpretations. She contrasts this with an interpretive approach deriving, perhaps, from a theoretical context.

The connection between practice and interpretive methodologies is made by those interviewees who are artists also. Michaela describes how she can marry her approaches to making her work to those being used by the makers of works she is exploring with learners;

> It's really satisfying when you can mix your activity strategy to the strategies of the artists you are actually looking at.... So it's that idea of being creative in thinking of ways of revealing the process if you like, but in a similar way to the way in which the artist used them.

I am interested in Michaela's allusion to revealing the process the artist underwent. It suggests that greater understanding of artworks can be achieved through interrogating the ways in which the work has come into being.

Michaela appears to see that decisions made by artists during the art making process, or their 'strategies', have an important contribution to make to developing

interpretations. She seeks to make these strategies accessible to learners. Similarly Liz Ellis connects her status as an artist, her interest in the art process as manifest in works and her pedagogy when she says:

> My approach as an artist educator is fundamentally informed by being a practicing artist, so for example, the ideas and materials of the artworks in Tate Modern is the starting point for me in investigating works with all audiences, whether I do this by offering handling resources or asking open questions (email correspondence, Sept 2005)

For Liz the interpretive process is concerned, at least initially, with unpicking the formal and conceptual elements of art, which she undertakes in part by asking questions. Hence the questions described in chapter five's narrative such as 'why might the artist have chosen to do a painting?' are employed to encourage learners to connect the process of making with the form and content of the work itself. Referring to this aspect of the interpretive process interviewees used terms such as 'opening the work up' and 'unlocking' what is in front of the viewers. There is a sense that meanings can be revealed through this process of interrogation.

In her interview Esther describes how an artist's approach to investigating an artwork differs from an art historian's. Referring to students she had been working with, she says:

> There was a marked difference between someone who was doing an art history degree and somebody who was doing a fine art degree and the art historian wanted to collect meaning and take it to the work. Whereas the fine art student wanted to go to the work and unlock what was there standing in front of them.

Echoing Joleen's comment above, Esther implies that the artist deconstructs a work and builds up an interpretation. The art historian, in contrast, brings their accumulated knowledge to bear on the work in order to contextualise and explain it. Although presenting a particular, narrow view of art historians, Esther's statement is significant, not least because its sentiments are articulated by other interviewees. These comments reveal their different perceptions of artists and art historians, but also indicate how a specific artistic epistemology might inform their teaching.

In chapter four I examine how Michaela describes interpreting art. Because Michaela trained as an art historian and fine artist, her insights into the different approaches taken by both are illuminating. Like Esther and Joleen, Michaela implies that, as an art historian, she would draw on her existing expertise to locate work within wider theoretical and historical locales. Whereas as an artist she interrogates artworks' formal and conceptual qualities in relation to her own practice exclusively. The starting points for these two processes of interpretation are, in the first case, the viewer's own specialist knowledge and in the second, the processes involved in producing an artwork. Joleen, Michaela and Esther's comments suggest they understand art historians to have particular interpretive strategies deriving from a theoretical knowledge base. These differ from artists' more experiential approaches that focus more on formal and conceptual processes of production.

Arguably by taking this 'artistic' approach, artist educators confer special status on the art object and, by extension, the artist in the process of making meaning.
The tensions around reconstructing artistic intention are outlined in chapter one, yet the interview data suggest that these artist educators take account of how artists' decision making processes inform the meaning of artworks. Lucy, for example, considers that an artist's intellectual process must be acknowledged in the learning process:

> Although we are wary of talking about artists' intentions you have to acknowledge and respect an artist and their work and the decisions they have made and I suppose what I most want people to understand is that an artist is exactly like you and they have to go through a series of decisions.

Lucy's desire to recognise the role occupied by the artist in creating the artwork is combined with a reticence to acknowledge artistic intention. This, I believe, demonstrates her awareness of the problems associated with treating the artist as a unique genius who imbues the work with its one exclusive meaning. However, echoing Michaela's comment above regarding artists' 'strategies' she still identifies a special status for the artist in creating work. This position resembles that taken by Griselda Pollock, whose identification of the artwork as 'somebody's particular project' (Pollock interviewed in Raney, 2003:147), is examined in chapter four. In Pollock's

view the artist, working within a particular social and historic context, contributes to an artwork's meaning in a specific way.

Yet although an artist's intention is problematised, a focus on the decisions the artist has made can slip into a conversation about what the artist meant. For example, the narrative reveals how Michaela negotiated what Euan Uglow might have intended to communicate to the viewer. Charman & Ross (2005) also found that during Tate summer school, teachers found it difficult to embrace the concept of multiple interpretations. Instead they sought to identify a single authoritative voice to provide a definitive meaning of a work and 'most often' this voice was taken to be the artist's (*Ibid*, 2005). The interviews also reveal where artist educators refer to artistic intention in relation to making meaning. For example, Michèle describes how she approaches works in the gallery:

> I am artist, this is a piece of art; I can get near this somehow. And I'm not quite sure what I am going to use but it will be something to do with why does it look like this? And what motivated [the artist] and intentionality and stuff like that.

Michèle starts by engaging with the work and then questioning what the artist's role was in terms of creating it. Her instinct is to place herself in the position of the artist and seek to understand the work in terms of what the artist did and the process they underwent.

However Tim distances himself from seeing meaning in the work as the product of artists' purpose when he says:

> [An interpretation] is nothing to do with artists' intentions. It's not about intentionality. It's to do with what the evidence is in front of you.

Tim's use of 'evidence' reveals that he perceives artworks do not reveal the ideas and ambitions of artists, but represent certain practices and, as Hall (1997) states, 'forms of signification' that contribute to the production of meanings. Tim goes on to describe what he hopes learners take from their experience in the gallery:

> I would also hope that they learn that art is not about self-expression. What is going on there is... an artist constructing.... what their place is in the world....I want them to learn that artworks are not autonomous objects but that they are

> connected to, grow out of and attend to a whole range of fields of knowledge and things in the world and events and artists, either consciously or unconsciously are reflecting their world.

Artworks are here described as more than the sum of an artist's activities; they are cultural products that are socially constructed. This latter approach is acknowledged by Pollock above and found within visual culture, where the concept of 'signifying practices' recognizes how wider contexts within which work is produced and received also shape its meaning (Hall, 1997). However, Tim's comments do not reference how art is received or its location in the gallery; at this point he is concerned with the 'evidence' presented by the art object. He is focusing on two of the three sites at which meaning is made according to Rose (2001). These are; the 'site of production' (how an image is made) and the 'site of the image itself' (what it looks like) (*Ibid*, 2001: 188). In the next chapter I consider how the interviewees understand the third location: the 'site of its audiencing' (how an image is seen).

As well as potentially privileging the artist in the interpretive process, interviewees identify other concerns with the artist educators' approach. As noted above, David considers that the focus on experiential meaning making results in learners failing to examine works in relation to wider cultural concerns. Nor, in his view, are they questioning the status of the object as art. Tim also acknowledges that artists' approach to looking at art necessarily (and not always positively) informs how they engage with learners. He says:

> But there are things that artists are not good at initially. They are not good at engaging with works of art. Because what you [an artist] are doing when you are looking at works of art is you are thinking about your own practice all the time, whereas art historians, when they are looking at a work of art are putting it in an art historical context, which is different. Or they are looking at it as evidence of ...something that... is relevant to a particular area of study. Artists are not, so they have to learn not only how they engage themselves, but also to learn techniques so that others can do that too.

Although not altogether clear, Tim's reference to artists 'engaging with works of art' suggests that artists do not focus on art in its broader context, hence his comparison with art historians. He also implies that artists are used to understanding work as

components of art practice only and need to learn ways of engaging with other discourses. In other words, artists need to move beyond an individual and experiential process of making meaning when working with learners.

Artist educators in the gallery need to function as educators as much as artists, Tim implies. They have a responsibility to negotiate a learning process for others, which should include other interpretive strategies and theoretical discourses. Therefore although an 'artistic approach' may correspond with the approach adopted by Tate Modern, artists themselves need to acquire additional knowledge and skills (such as those possessed by art historians) to work effectively as educators.

7.6 Summary and conclusion

The context for artist educators' practice has been examined in this chapter in order to understand how Tate Modern's sanctioned methodology is affected by and informs artist-led teaching. The discourse of 'learner-centred' pedagogy has been re-considered and space given to how artist educators actively shape the form and content of sessions.

An analysis of the 'tools for looking' that artist educators perceive they are 'teaching' participants has been provided. These strategies for interpretation are seen as the desired outcomes of the learning process, rather than the transmission of specific theoretical knowledge about art. This sharing of practical 'know-how' is described as stemming from these educators' experience of art practice. Equally their recognition of an artist's specific contribution to an artwork's meaning is ascribed to these artists' own familiarity with artistic processes. Additional knowledge and skills which artist educators require to work effectively with learners has also been touched on.

Building on the analysis in this chapter, the tensions around the artist educators' approach to negotiating meanings are examined further in the following one. In addition the particular dialogic exchange between educator, learner and artwork is

interrogated. These two chapters inform the construction of my Model of Making Meaning in the Gallery (MMG) outlined in chapter nine.

8. Teaching and learning in the gallery: focusing on the encounter between artist educators, learners and artworks

8.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the examination of the artists' education activities in the previous chapter. The focus here is how research participants perceive artist educators negotiate the process of meaning making in the gallery. Connections are made to the artistic process outlined in chapter five and to literature addressing artists as educators. The chapter extends the analysis of how artist educators' experience of art practice informs their work with learners and the implications of this in terms of their pedagogic strategies and the forms of knowledge generated. The chapter also considers the active contribution made by the art object to the interpretive process and revisits the concept of dialogic knowledge construction introduced in chapter five in the context of artists' engagement with their work in progress. An analysis of how and why artist educators introduce theoretical and contextual information, and examine broader social and political issues with learners assists further in establishing how meanings are made in the gallery.

Two additional issues are addressed, since I see them as emerging from and contributing to the engagement between the artist educators, learners and artworks. The former is effective dialogue (as defined in chapter two) between teacher and learners within a negotiated process of learning. Consideration is given to whether such dialogue is possible in the Art into Life (AiL) sessions at Tate Modern. The latter issue concerns the multiple roles artist educators inhabit with learners, which include facilitator, co-learner, performer, role model and teacher. Although these artist educators typically resist identification with 'teaching', here I elaborate further why this aspect of their pedagogic practice deserves attention. The chapter concludes by examining the characteristics of knowledge generated in the gallery, how the learners' interpretations are supported or invalidated by the artist educators and how this process corresponds with the aims of Tate's community programme overall.

In this chapter I pay particular attention to the artist educators' and education curators' perceptions. Re-reading the interview transcripts I was conscious of the depth of knowledge and expertise revealed by interviewees and the extent of their reflection on practice. This has resulted in a wealth of data. More significantly, I am aware of how my thinking has been shaped by the interviews. It is during these exchanges with the artist educators and education curators that I see evidence of my learning and where my position as a researcher and the interviewees' position as 'the researched' becomes less clearly defined. It is exemplified most noticeably during these conversations regarding pedagogy in the gallery, hence my concern to portray that relationship here.

Yet I am also aware of differences between individual research participants' perceptions of pedagogy in the gallery and also between their perceptions and my understandings of their practice gained through observations. These diverse perspectives are considered here. Moreover, the narrative is drawn on, as are models of gallery education, pedagogy and wider learning theories, in order to contextualise, and at times problematise, the views expressed in the interviews.

8.2 The learner-centred approach: how artist educators connect with participants' knowledge and experience

Tate Modern's community programme aims to enable use and enjoyment of the gallery, particularly by those new to galleries and modern art (Cox & Keizer, 2003). Community education's remit thus extends beyond transmitting knowledge about the collection. As positioned within Tate rhetoric, the 'learner-centred' programme focuses on visitors' experiences and promotes activities which encourage first-time visitors to engage with and feel comfortable visiting the gallery. The programme aspires to make the collection relevant to visitors, enabling them to gain a greater sense of connectivity with the institution.

My examination of the structure of the 'tailor-made' AiL programme (Cox & Keizer, 2003) and the pedagogic exchange between learners and artist educators indicates that a learner-centred approach is actively aspired to. For instance, in contrast with a lecture based model where the teacher is unlikely to have much awareness of participants' experience or knowledge, prior to each AiL session the artist educator discusses the needs of group members with the group leader over the telephone. Liz Ellis clarifies the purpose of this call:

> Yes always a phone call from us in advance of visit as this is essential...I use it to map out the visit with the leader (e.g. has the group visited before, what are their aims, any specific learning goals/current art projects that they want the workshop tied in with, are they interested/willing to do practical making in the gallery, then practical things like mobility issues, timing of workshop, likelihood of being late etc). I can't remember the group ever changing this on arrival (Email response, May 16th 2007)

The artist educators, according to Liz, have some broad sense of the group's interests, concerns and aspirations for the visit, enabling them to structure the workshop accordingly, although these can be wide ranging (Cox & Keizer, 2005). Furthermore the AiL programme caters for an increasing number of groups who are repeat visitors (*Ibid,* 2005). This can allow artist educators to build relationships with individuals and become familiar with their interests and knowledge and with them as learners.

However, despite having some broad sense of what the group brings to the workshop, with new groups the artist educators' understanding is necessarily based upon the group leader's view of participants, rather than individuals themselves. Therefore, typically during first-time sessions artist educators are working with learners who are unfamiliar to them in a workshop lasting 90 minutes. Liz acknowledges difficulties with this:

> I think that can be the frustrating aspect of the job; that you see so many groups and you probably only work with them once and you have no knowledge of what they bring.

At the same time Liz is sensitive and responsive and adapts her approach accordingly. Responding to my question regarding whether she tailors her activities to the group, she replies:

> Yes, definitely. The pace really alters. For me the more information I have in advance about who I'm working with the better, so I will try and take my lead from the level the group is presenting to me. Particularly within the context of the community programme what is really interesting is how unexpected the level can be. So, for instance mental health groups can contain people who are incredible experts on Blake or will have been painting away quite privately for 20 years. That level of expertise can be quite unexpected and exciting...and we all really try and work on anticipating and planning, but also once you are actually with them then tailoring what you are doing accordingly.

Liz acknowledges how learners' experience contributes to the learning process. She values the knowledge participants bring and, although finding it challenging, works with it. When engaging with new learners, Liz recognizes the need for flexibility; she adapts her approach according to the group's characteristics. This adaptability is evident in the narrative, notably in the artist educators' decision to split the plumbers into smaller groups to allow greater participation by participants and in her conversations with individuals who wanted more specific information on the collection.

Although their knowledge and experience may vary initially, Liz perceives that each learner engages in the same meaning making processes. A similar view is articulated by Michaela who describes how she treats different learners equally:

> [I] take the individual on their own terms in front of the work... I used to do loads of prison work and I thought the best strategy was always to treat them exactly the same as an undergraduate.

This democratic positioning of the learner is shared by other artists who work in educational contexts (Abdu'Allah, 2005, Illingworth, 2005) who emphasise artists' responsibility to engage critically with participants' meaning making, rather than impose an inflexible agenda upon them. The artist thus adapts their pedagogic approaches to support learners.

Flexibility and adaptability are characteristics of art making as described in chapter five. In particular the richness and messy nature of the artistic process are acknowledged and it is argued there that artists feel comfortable working within an uncertain and shifting process. Sekules (2003) identifies that artists work with 'enigma and uncertainty.... they are pre-disposed to innovate, try the untested and challenge authority' (*Ibid*, 2003:138). She considers that the questioning and experiential ethos of the gallery enables the experimental practice of artists to be translated into effective pedagogy. As noted in the previous chapter, tolerance of ambiguity and plural modes of meaning making are also seen by Tim as key to artist educators' effectiveness; art making and learning are adjacent journeys of discovery and knowledge building which are neither fixed nor straightforward. He, like Sekules, perceives that those artists who work as educators are adept at negotiating both.

Awareness of 'the messiness of learning' is an attribute of educators involved in effective learner-centred teaching (Weimer, 2002: 81). In particular the ability to allow learners to develop their own meanings entails allowing for failures, encouraging students to solve their own problems and orchestrating less of the learning tasks (*Ibid*, 2002). This can be understood as sharing control with learners; an issue which resonates with the interviewees. Lucy recognises the need to lessen her control and acknowledges that effective engagement and learning can occur when she 'lets go':

> What you have to do is let go and allow them to take you. And that's when I love it, then I think I'm no longer in control... and I love it when I'm not in control, but it's enjoyable and it's working.

For Lucy, learning 'works' when learners take ownership of the process and become actively engaged and self-directed. Thus for her learners must relate their experiences to the work:

> Because the moment they do it themselves...the moment they are talking about themselves in relation to the artwork, they are contextualising it and they will remember it.

In Lucy's ideal learning scenario, learners control their meaning making. This requires the educator to step outside their role as leader, instructing and relaying

information, and give responsibility to participants for making decisions, solving problems and directing their learning (Craft, 2005).

Yet other artist educators acknowledge that sharing control occurs within a structure ultimately defined by the artist educator. As Michaela says:

> I'm an expert and... that allows me to say 'right I'm going to be the person who facilitates this workshop and you've got to trust me in that role.' It's much more like giving me the permission to set the ball rolling and set the parameters of the games, the activities and looking at the works.

Therefore, although learners may be encouraged to direct their learning, the process is typically controlled by artist educators through the workshop format. This control is evident in the narrative; the artist educator chooses the artworks, the time spent looking at each and resources used to aid interpretation. It is also highlighted by the artist educator's resistance to the group leader's challenge. Arguably therefore workshops comprise teacher-led activities within which participants are encouraged to take ownership of their learning.

There are practical reasons, including the architecture of the gallery and the characteristics of the works, which in the interviewees' view vindicate adopting a structured approach with learners, wherein artist educators take the lead. Liz for example, articulates why she would find it difficult to work with a particular piece:

> For instance I've never worked with Dan Flavin. I just don't have a clue. I mean if someone requested it, it would be a challenge and I would have a go, but it's not just because physically it's a nightmare corridor space, it's because I'm not convinced by the integrity of his ideas... Whereas there are some spaces that are completely dynamic and particular works and particular artists that you know will engage people.

Some art works, this comment implies, are more appropriate for learners than others, due to their location, but also because of the artist educators' attraction or resistance to their conceptual content. Liz uses her knowledge of the collection to make decisions on behalf of learners, hence it is important she 'knows' the work. Yet, as Michèle acknowledges, this knowledge does not necessarily equate to art historical expertise:

> I don't worry about not having art historical knowledge, I worry in a sense about sometimes not having a firm enough view myself of what is it that the art work is doing, what's its job, what's it saying. I've not had enough time or space as a punter to get close to the experience myself.

What Michèle is saying, I believe, is that she needs to engage with artworks and develop an interpretation through close looking before expecting participants to do the same. Rather than locating herself as an expert, she aligns herself with the learners' experience. Nonetheless the extent of the artist educators' prior experience and knowledge of the collection in relation to the learners indicates that it is unrealistic to position both as occupying equal learning positions.

Examining how artist educators retain control is relevant when considering whether a learner-centred approach is possible under these circumstances. Maryellen Wiener (2002) stipulates that in 'true' learner-centred scenarios students have considerable input into decisions regarding course activities, course policies, course content and evaluation activities. However, her focus is longer-term programmes in university classrooms, scenarios significantly different from the short-term interventions under consideration here. It is arguable that, given the context and rationale for the AiL workshops, it would be difficult to accommodate these stipulations.

It is timely to remember that AiL sessions are intended as introductions to the gallery and the majority of groups attending include first time visitors who may not be familiar with the collection. Equally the length of workshops (90 minutes) means there is limited scope for visitors new to Tate Modern to become acquainted with the entire display. Hence there are pragmatic reasons why artist educators select the works to be studied. However, even constructing the AiL programme as partially learner-centred requires examining how artist educators prioritise learners within a pre-determined structure. Furthermore, in the next section I examine the format and content of the pedagogic exchange between learners, artist educators and artworks. This analysis reveals how educators' knowledge and expertise are deployed to enhance learners' engagement. The negotiated exchange between viewer and

artwork (and the theoretical discourses surrounding works) is also considered. From this I identify that the learning process is tripartite; it is centred on learners, but also on artist educators and artworks.

8.3 The pedagogic exchange in the gallery

Examining the pedagogic exchange in the gallery illuminates how Tate's 'learner-centred' methodology translates into practice. It is during this exchange that the institution, the artist educator and artworks are deconstructed then remade through group dialogue. Potentially, this process enables participants to actively shape their learning.

Within AiL sessions, typically the first activity involves 'orientation', which can include providing 'information about the collection and preparing to focus, using a warm-up activity or game' (Fuirer, 2005: 5). The introductory talk and drawing exercise described in the narrative are representative activities, which serve to familiarize a group with the gallery layout and provide the workshop's rationale. Artist educators may also describe how the collection is hung and reference themes underpinning different rooms. In doing so an aspect of gallery hegemony – how the collection is curated – is made more explicit for learners. This is important for Michaela, as she says:

> The problems curatorially are when the texts are actually hidden and the subtext and the agenda are hidden and they are presenting themselves as a kind of authority or an overview of the 20th and the 21st century. But [Tate Modern] doesn't do that and the curatorial voice is just that – it's a voice, and so long as it's explicit I think that's fine.

But why should this revelation be significant? Michaela's criticism of galleries presenting an implicit 'authoritative' history, corresponds with critiques of modernist institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York (see chapter one) that are notable for presenting a 'definitive', if teleological, progression of modern art (Duncan, 2002). Yet by not making the ideological idiosyncrasies of their curatorial position explicit, arguably such galleries entrench a dominant, yet partial, discourse

whilst discouraging any questioning of their authority. Michaela suggests that in contrast Tate Modern, through adopting and making explicit the thematic hang, provides a more questioning and less definitive scenario (see chapter two for an analysis of the curatorial strategy of the gallery). Others, however, argue that the thematic hang serves only to confuse and results in the curators' voice dominating the work itself (Sylvester, 2000). Nonetheless, during the 'orientation' stage the gallery as the only authority is problematised and instead plurality, with the curators' voice as one of potentially many, is introduced.

In some respects the artist educators diffuse institutional authority and themselves as 'experts' further by distancing themselves from 'expert' teachers or art historians and introducing themselves as artists. Arguably, however, the status of the artist as ultimate authority within the gallery is reinforced by the artist educators identifying themselves in this way. Michaela considers that learners have different expectations of artists and she can establish a particular relationship with learners if she describes herself as one:

> **Michaela (M)**: I think if you say you are a teacher they would expect such and such, but if you are an artist that somehow gives you a little bit of leeway not to do what you are expected to do. It creates a different arena of discussion.....
> **Emily (E)**: So what would happen if you said 'my name is Michaela and I'm an art historian'?
> **M**: They would expect dates and movements and context and much more formal presentation, not necessarily, but I think that is most people's expectation – they expect an expert in the field and they would expect expertise and knowledge.

Artists as constructed by Michaela occupy a less prescribed role than teachers or art historians. They are not associated with specific areas of knowledge or 'expertise'. Michèle also considers that participants see artists as somehow different from teachers:

> [When you say] 'I am an artist' it's almost as though you can see something go across their minds... it gives you permission somehow to be somebody other, somebody different, not a teacher, not a policeman, not a parent. So I suppose by extension, when you can facilitate co-learning it's because you can side yourself with the artwork.

These quotations indicate the artist educators' own preconceptions of teachers, art historians, parents and policemen as much as learners' views. However, their locating of artists as somehow freer corresponds with others' perceptions of the artist working in educational contexts as the 'outsider', opening new contexts and challenging the familiar (Jeffery, 2005, Sekules, 2003, Sharp & Dust, 1990). Furthermore, although not acknowledged by these artist educators as informing their construction of themselves as artists in chapter four, there are echoes here, perhaps, of the eighteenth century Romantic artist existing outside of conventional structures (Harrison *et al*, 2000).

Two further issues are significant; first Michaela's questioning of expertise based on 'dates and movements and context' suggests that she may possess such knowledge, but she does not foregound it during AiL sessions. Second Michèle sees her ability to facilitate co-learning stemming from her status as an artist. I revisit these issues when considering the artist as co-learner, but note here that at the start of sessions artist educators distance themselves from traditional authority figures.

By diffusing their authority artist educators seek to enable learners to feel confident in the gallery and capable of developing their own varied interpretations. As Alison says:

> Here people meet an artist and they don't have to be particularly clever and it's an artist reassuring them that they don't.

Yet as noted earlier learners can find it difficult to disregard a single authoritative interpretation, be it that of an artist or art historian, and need support to engage critically with artworks and develop their own ideas (Charman & Ross, 2004). Craft (2005) goes further, arguing that without the benefit of structured guidance and tasks, learners draw only on their limited experience and knowledge, which results in reduced understanding and inability to transfer their knowledge to new situations. By implication artist educators must provide support, without assuming responsibility for participants' learning.

8.3.1 Focusing on the artwork and initiating dialogue

Typically during sessions artist educators ask learners to examine a few works for more prolonged periods to develop their own impressions initially. During these periods, learners engage in a metaphoric dialogue with works and develop a personal meaning, based on their experience of it (Lachapelle *et al*, 2003). The construction of the interpretive process as dialogic returns us to Prentice's (1995) understanding of art making as a dialogic exchange between artist and artwork described in chapter five. During both processes the suggestion is that meaning making takes place through active interaction between individuals and art objects.

The connection between the artistic process and interpretation is also made by Danto (Danto cited in Charman *et al*, 2006). He sees viewer and artist involved in a process of continuous creation; the artist engages in making and interpreting, whilst the viewer simultaneously experiences and interprets art. Therefore viewers (like artists) make and reflect, but in this instance what is being created is an interpretation. This construction of the interpretative process as individual sense-making can, in turn, be aligned to the constructivist view of learning. Therefore, in the gallery there is a need, according to Liz, for prolonged engagement:

> Within a workshop all of us are engaged in trying to get people's processes to slow down and that's why we always look at such a few number of works. Because we think that works need time and they need re-visiting and they need that space to explore.

Focused observation underpins the interpretive process at Tate Modern, since looking is central to individual meaning making (see chapter seven). Interpretations derive from learners' experience, rather than for instance, an introductory speech from the artist educator. Hence participants form their original impressions unmediated (Burham & Kai Kee, 2005), although at Tate learners may be assisted through the employment of handling materials and other activities, such as the word prompts and photographs introduced during the narrative.

8.3.2 The use of handling materials and practical activities

To assist learners' engagement with works, artist educators may introduce an activity at this stage. These are designed to actively involve learners and stimulate their thinking around the work, as Liz says:

> Particularly within the context of the community team I think that other resources are also really useful here. So handling resources, all the games we do, all those things help engage people with slowing down and reflecting.

Again the emphasis is on encouraging learners to take time, explore the work and reflect on that experience through focused activity. In this respect the introduction of specific activities resembles the 'do' and 'reflect' stages in the Dennison & Kirk (1990) experiential learning cycle (see figure 5.2). The learner is positioned as self-motivated and active, involved in tasks that enhance their experience of the artwork, whilst promoting reflection on that experience.

Practical activities also introduce an element of playfulness and experimentation, which, as noted by Tim in the previous chapter, are keystones of the philosophy underpinning Tate Modern's methodology. Play is central to the development of creativity (Prentice, 2000a) and Michèle, writing on her experience in the gallery, sees parallels between playful and haptic forms of learning and the intuitive and experimental approaches adopted by artists:

> In the artist, intuition and implicit knowledge are highly valued as a working tool, so too for the viewer or learner....In a gallery workshop, the learner is invited to step inside the framework of play, to take risks and think divergently, using intuition as well as reflection and reason as part of the learning process (Fuirer, 2005: 10)

As with the artistic process described in chapter five, the meaning making process in the gallery is seen by Michèle as involving the rational and non-rational. Learners engage in sensory and intellectual 'games', which allow them to explore and develop new knowledge. This knowledge is 'a result of a creative process based on imagination' (Lachapelle *et al*, 2003: 87) and may not necessarily correspond to others' interpretations.

At this stage the artist educator as facilitator is foregrounded. Alison Cox describes it thus; 'the role of the artist educator is to act as a guide to discussion, building on individuals' responses' (Cox, 2006: 4). As described in the narrative, they prompt, ask questions and support learners in developing initial interpretations. Additional contextual information is rarely introduced here and, in contrast, artist educators typically discourage learners from reading wall texts in the gallery. Emphasis is on encouraging and accommodating a range of viewpoints, rather than imposing one interpretation.

Tolerating concurrent strands of interest is a characteristic of the artist as constructed in the Art Making model in chapter five, where they are seen to pursue various lines of enquiry and feel comfortable with uncertainty. These qualities are perceived as valuable attributes by the education curators. Echoing Tim's views outlined above, Alison Cox argues:

> I was thinking about why it might be important to work with artists, or what's particular about an artist... they are not frightened of not knowing and not understanding something... that is part of their daily lives and so therefore they have an attitude that can embrace that... they can accommodate a very wide range of viewpoints.

Artist educators' familiarity with plurality and uncertainty, according to Alison, allows them to inhabit and nurture a learning environment where different interpretations develop. I examine below whether, by tolerating plurality, artist educators enable participants to construct individual and potentially conflicting meanings.

8.3.3 Developing learners' individual responses: moving from facilitation

The interpretive process does not, however, conclude when learners have developed their individual responses. Although participants' knowledge and experience form the basis for their interpretation, interviewees were clear that artist educators need to encourage learners to move beyond wholly personal meanings. As Tim says:

> [A personal meaning] is quite a good initial response; the whole idea of enabling people to realise that we can validate their response, by giving them the tools to express it. But then I hope that several things would happen. One,

their view would be challenged and discussed by the group and that different views would be expressed that challenged it. But then the artist educator would introduce other stuff, which might be a set of ideas from art history or other thoughts which makes them think that other people have thought about this subject before and have said so and that there are bits of factual information that are useful. So by looking at it in different ways, through different mediations, you can actually see different things in it.

Several issues are raised here. Whilst supporting the initial development of learners' knowledge, Tim suggests it is not sufficient. It is important for him that individual meanings are challenged and developed through dialogue and the introduction of contextual information. This, according to Tim, enables richer and more informed meanings to be made.

In saying this Tim articulates the philosophy underpinning Tate methodology wherein 'personal responses ...should be questioned and extended if they are to become more than just personal associations' (Charman *et al*, 2006: 57). This approach finds support elsewhere, not least in Lachapelle *et al*'s (2003) model, wherein learners take advantage of the 'theoretical' knowledge of others in order to further their understanding. Theoretical knowledge is found mainly in texts, wall displays, or is provided by educators and is defined as:

> Logical, unified and well articulated. It must provide the concepts that will assist the viewer to separate fact from fiction, to eliminate any stereotyped views from his of her thinking, and to go beyond premature conclusions and initial, tentative, inferences about the meaning of a work of art (*Ibid,* 2003: 89).

This scenario wherein participants' original interpretations are extended through exposure to theoretical information, is similar to that encouraged at Tate Modern (Charman & Ross, 2005, Fuirer, 2005), but the notions of separating 'fact from fiction' and eliminating 'stereotyped views' are questionable. Both comments suggest value judgments on the part of the writers. Toby Jackson, for example, describes the variety of narratives that surround art as 'a kind of fiction' (Jackson, quoted in Jackson & Meecham, 1999: 95), thereby acknowledging that all interpretations are to a degree subjective. Lachapelle *et al,* in contrast, appear to see theoretical knowledge as objective and value free, whereas personal knowledge is subjective and value laden.

As with David's comments, this hierarchical positioning of knowledge echoes Scott *et al's* (2004) framework and will be interrogated further in chapter nine.

Developing learners' original interpretations is a delicate process, care is essential to avoid promulgating a hierarchical epistemology and disengaging the learner. As Michèle says in her own writing:

> It is a challenge to provide the right amount of guidance, without providing too much direction. Direction is needed to help learners, but too much direction detracts from their sense of ownership (Fuirer, 2005: 7)

So as not to dis-empower learners, artist educators need to work alongside the group encouraging them, but also questioning their assumptions, clarifying their views and supplying them with additional relevant information. It is through dialogic exchange between artist educator, learners and artworks that this multi-faceted form of pedagogic engagement is enacted. As is evident in the narrative the artist educator needs to occupy several roles beyond that of facilitator.

8.4 The importance of dialogue

The challenge facing artist educators is to enable participants to deepen their engagement with the artwork by taking on others' views, whilst not losing ownership of their learning. Dialogue between group members, artwork and artist educator is seen by the interviewees and others (Burnham & Kai Kee, 2005, Carnell & Meecham, 2001) as the way in which this balance is achieved.

So why is dialogue effective in this context? In chapter one, dialogue is identified as enabling risk taking, openness, interpretation and reflection (Carnell & Lodge, 2002). Dialogue can also encourage people to:

> Give serious consideration to views that may differ substantially from their own, and they are willing to hold many conflicting possibilities in their minds simultaneously (Gablik, 1995: 26).

The dialogic exchange thus allows for learners, as a group, to expand their original individual interpretations in a challenging, yet supportive gallery environment. This in turn suggests a shift toward co-constructivist learning; meanings are being made through collaborative, rather than individual investigation. Language and dialogue are central to this social process, wherein learning takes place within communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Michaela recognizes the importance of dialogue within this process of collaborative meaning making amongst learners:

> It's like I'm saying something and I'm being listened to and people are responding or building a group response. People just grow bigger don't they visibly under that kind of attention and participation.

According to Michaela, through participating in a community of practice and engaging in group dialogue learners develop understanding and gain confidence. Such communities of practice function effectively when a sense of shared conventions, perceptions and activities develop; a process that takes time (*Ibid*, 1998). Consequently researchers have questioned whether co-constructive pedagogy can take place during a short visit to a gallery since there is no time for a shared repertoire of ideas and sense of joint enterprise and ownership to develop (Addison & Burgess, 2006). Equally shared learning practices also may depend on the learners' prior experiences and the facilitators' skills or desire to engage more collaboratively.

A commitment to promoting dialogue is evident in the interviews. As Liz says; 'Dialogue is so important; sharing, arguing, disagreeing about what you see'. Yet Addison and Burgess' concerns regarding co-constructive learning are relevant here. As noted above, AiL sessions are relatively short and frequently involve first-time visitors. Co-constructive learning relies on an atmosphere of openness and trust if learners are to articulate their thoughts and accept different views. Yet as is examined below, groups can be unwilling to engage openly with each other. Also artist educators need to encourage learners to respond to each other and build an interpretation together. As demonstrated in the narrative this can prove difficult in the gallery, not least because of the crowded and noisy environment or large group size.

Nonetheless, artist educators see themselves playing an active part in fostering dialogue, whilst enacting a range of roles. Lucy places the emphasis on listening and asking questions:

> [Dialogue] doesn't work without you listening and so no matter how much you have planned it only works if you are listening to them. Which means that you have to give them the questions to answer, for you to listen to and then come up with the next thing.

Describing her relationship with the group, Lucy identifies how artist educators need to recognise where learners are, what cues they might need and then provide those prompts appropriately. Lucy sees herself as a focal point in the discussion and, as described in the narrative, she responds to learners, before asking further questions. This suggests that questions are channeled through the artist educator, rather than dialogue developing amongst group members.

Yet Michèle recognises that she rarely answers questions, but tends rather to deflect inquiries back, so learners explore further. As noted in chapter seven questioning underpins the Tate Method; it encourages plurality and openness in developing interpretations. It also promotes learner confidence; an increasing 'aesthetic visual literacy' (Broughton, 1986) since their views are being considered seriously and developed. Therefore as Michèle states 'It's automatic for me to be always bouncing questions back to them, never answering it for them.'

Artist educators state that as well as deflecting participants' questions, they may also acknowledge when they do not know something. Michaela equates feeling confident with being able to admit a degree of ignorance:

> I think as an artist I am confident in a gallery, it's my home, it's where I belong... And I think that transfers very quickly to a group of people, where they recognise that you are also confident to admit where you don't know stuff as well.

Her status as an artist in the gallery enables Michaela to acknowledge not knowing. Similarly, Tim sees that artists do not need to adopt an 'overly didactic approach', since they are 'used to not knowing'. This echoes Alison's comment above and

resonates with the construction of the artist in the Art Making model; comfortable with uncertainty and embarking on a process of investigation rather than explanation. This willingness to acknowledge ignorance shapes the educators' relationship with learners.

8.4.1 The artist as co-learner

Interviewees see the admission of unfamiliarity as akin to positioning themselves as co-learners. The teacher as co-learner is found in co-constructivist models (Carnell & Lodge, 2002), where emphasis is not on the 'expert', since educators share and re-order their knowledge in collaboration with learners. Michèle feels comfortable with this construction, as she says:

> [Artist educators] are in that privileged position where we can be co-learners and it's perfectly OK for you to go 'you know I never thought of that before. I don't know, let's think about it together'.

By suggesting that she and participants consider issues together Michèle locates herself alongside learners, engaged in a process of group enquiry. She positions herself as a collaborative investigator, rather than a detached didact. When I asked her why she could become a co-learner, Michèle responded:

> Art is allowed to be ambiguous and contradictory and temperamental and fluid and not have fixed meanings and I think because that's the process that you are representing you can be playful like the artwork and you can be irreverent.

A connection to art making is clearly made here. Michèle, as an artist, sees herself aligned with an unstable and constructive process and consequently adopts a fluid approach to meaning making in the gallery. She does not need to position herself as the expert, since she is herself engaged with a constantly shifting, multi-faceted activity. This quotation also suggests that Michèle sees herself as a role model in some respects; she is 'representing' the position of active investigator and the art making process itself. In the following chapter I return to the artist educators' alignment with art when examining how this informs their construction of themselves as active makers of meaning, rather than dispensers of expert knowledge.

The teacher as co-learner moves away from centre stage (Weimer, 2002) and the emphasis shifts to the 'learning community' (Anderson, 1999) to take responsibility for their learning. This shift, according to Liz, equates to a successful workshop:

> [When] we feel that a session has gone really well it's because everyone has been engaged with that process of investigating – we found things out together as a group, we learnt together.

Liz suggests that effective learning occurs when group members actively involve themselves in meaning making. She thus echoes Michaela and Lucy's views concerning learner ownership and collaborative investigation identified earlier. These artist educators appear committed to shared learning practices, wherein the teacher works alongside participants.

Yet others imply that artists need to become 'celebrity performers' (Sekules, 2003) or even 'enchanters' (Baldwin,1997) when working with groups in the gallery, since the 'viewer can be captivated by the physical presence of the interpreter' (*Ibid*: 1997: 23). Certainly Lucy Wilson, who is trained in theatre, acknowledges that she can take on the role of performer, although this results in her 'sometimes trying to entertain rather than teach' and overly dominating the workshops. During workshops such as that described in the narrative the artist educators may shift between roles; at times taking the lead, yet also becoming co-learners at other moments whilst learners are more active. In my experience the shift can be almost imperceptible and transient. Observation notes in my research journal illuminate this shift:

> During the discussion the group suddenly becomes more energized and talk animatedly amongst themselves. There seems to be a shift in energy and an almost tangible excitement. It is as if they have 'got it' and need to share that understanding with each other. They don't need input from Michèle, they are bouncing ideas off each other. (Research journal entry, June 9th 2003)

Given the unpredictability of learners' engagement, artist educators' skill involves responding to participants and judging when to adopt these differing stances, a process that is not without tensions.

8.4.2 Recognising artist educators' knowledge and expertise

Locating the artist educator as co-learner does not negate the knowledge and skills they bring to the learning scenario. As noted previously, these practitioners possess theoretical and practical knowledge which they share with learners. According to Paulo Friere's (1973) 'dialogical' model, at the start of the learning process the teacher is expected to 'know' an object of knowledge (in this instance the art object) thoroughly. However through working with learners in mutual enquiry centred on the object of knowledge, teachers question their existing knowledge and 're-learn' (*Ibid*: 1973). Thus according to Friere in the gallery artist educators would begin with considerable expertise in comparison to learners, yet during workshops they would build on and re-evaluate their knowledge.

But is this what happens in the gallery? Certainly the artist educators are conscious of having knowledge which enables them to support learners and manage the workshop. Michaela describes it these terms:

> I need to know very broadly what issues might come up for me to be able to, not direct the conversation, but just chip in. I don't think you can do that with no knowledge at all and it's just a question of confidence. Thinking I can handle this because I know what might emerge loosely.

Knowledge gives Michaela confidence, but by identifying that she does not use her knowledge to dictate the workshop, she (like Michèle) appears keen to distance her approach from the transmission model and herself from a position of authority. Yet, responding to my asking her if she considered her knowledge meant she is powerful in relation to learners, Liz responded:

> Definitely, absolutely.... I think how to broker the context of that power... it is difficult and I am constantly wondering about how much or how little information I give out about the artworks.

Having knowledge, yet being selective about conveying it to learners, is important to Liz. In addition she voices frustration at how she considers she is perceived within the gallery because of the way she works with participants:

> In terms of my public persona at Tate Modern, very few people think I have that knowledge, because we work directly in front of the gallery works and because we sometimes are involved in practical things… I think probably most Tate colleagues as well as the public would think it's some kind of play scheme, [but] I've done an MA and I used to think about the context that Cornelia Parker occupies within contemporary practice. But it's not necessarily the most relevant thing for me to communicate in a gallery workshop.

Like Michaela, Liz has theoretical knowledge but chooses not to prioritise transmitting it to learners. Their aim is not to instill that information in participants. Her comments concerning her perception by others within the gallery indicate her awareness that education curators, such as David, may not recognise or value artist educators' more experiential pedagogy.

The ways in which these artist educators make judicious use of their knowledge corresponds with the community programme's aims: to enable participants to engage with the works. Hence artist educators seek to avoid usurping learners' developing interpretations by introducing potentially conflicting information. Instead, as at other galleries, knowledge is given to:

> Suggest possibilities… [and] relationships between a work and the circumstances of its production and reception (Burnham & Kai Kee, 2005: 71).

In the narrative, for example, the artist educator provides biographical information on the artist, Euan Uglow, but only after the group has discussed the painting for some time. Art historical information supports the participants' meaning making and informs their experience, it does not determine the interpretation. This stage of the interpretive process resembles the 'gather information' stage of the Art Making model, wherein artists are understood to acquire knowledge for the purposes of developing their own practice. During both, protagonists construct new meaning for themselves, by drawing on 'propositional' (Eraut, 1994) or theoretical knowledge to expand on their original ideas.

Artist educators share their knowledge when it assists learners, but seek to avoid becoming authoritarian. Yet, a potentially unproductive scenario arises if the artist

educator is knowledgeable about an artwork, but does not share that information for risk of alienating learners. Or, as Lucy puts it; 'I'm allowed to know lots of things but [I] don't want to frighten you off.' For Frances Borzello, educators' attempts to avoid being patronising or authoritarian by 'playing down' their knowledge, risk confusing learners and legitimising untenable interpretations (*Ibid*, 1995). (I return to the issue of what constitutes a legitimate interpretation below). Therefore artist educators need integrity and honesty and have to rely on their judgment when sharing knowledge.

Artist educators need to assess how much information to impart and when, a tension Esther sees is resolved through dialogue between artist educator and learners:

> There are a number of things that locate Rothko's work into a particular time and context and that's not to say that's the only way of thinking about it, but it's intrinsic to the work so it needs to be part of the discussion. Somebody within that exchange needs to know about that stuff. Now whether they reveal it or not is their skill as an educator and a conversationalist because you don't tell somebody your whole life story at a party, because that stops all the other conversations from happening and I think it's a very similar thing.

The effective exchange of knowledge between artist educator and learners, Esther suggests, involves sensitivity and appropriate timing. This requires practice and skill to comprehend the emerging ideas, whilst moving the dialogue forward (*Op cit*, 2005). Multiple meanings constantly change as individuals work towards building their own interpretations within the context of the group.

The artist educators are aware that this delicate dialogic process is not always maintained during workshops in the gallery. Lucy sees difficulties arising when the process is not shaped by learners and she imposes her authority unproductively:

> Yet the danger of that rigor is that you are going to follow my story and I've worked it all out perfectly for you. And I push the conclusions because I've got this story and I haven't actually allowed it to happen organically. I haven't let go of the control of the fact that you are going to learn this, this, this, this, in five steps and by the end you are going to come away knowing everything that I want you to know.

By retaining absolute control Lucy perceives she can fall into a mode of transmission. Here dialogue does not develop and instead she determines what learners should know, rather than allowing them to develop individual meanings.

In the previous chapter Michaela acknowledges that a session has 'failed' if she gives learners a lot of information, which suggests she too recognises that effective dialogue can break down. However, whereas Lucy implies it is the artist educator retaining control that prevents dialogue, Michaela assumes the role of expert teacher when she 'has lost [the group's] confidence' and feels the need 'to shore it up'. In other words the group's response leads her to adopt a more didactic role. Michaela's comments reveal how the group can affect the pedagogic exchange in the gallery, but that a 'negative' response can prompt artist educators to become more authoritarian. An example of dialogue breaking down is given by Liz. Describing how a group of students were having difficulty engaging with work and resisting discussing issues beyond their personal responses, she says:

> I found myself forcing them to try and take on this vision of how the room had been set up, even though it seemed to me that they weren't really wanting to admit that they had experienced it themselves.... they seemed to be finding it really difficult to value stuff that they didn't understand and I found myself being very authoritarian about it. Because what I got them to do prior to that point was note a lot of experience based responses and I thought it was starting to slip too much into that .... So I felt I wanted them to know who had made these pieces, you know they are at Tate Modern, these aren't general pieces they are by specific artists who have specific and different intents.

It is relevant to note that this session took place as part of the schools' programme at Tate Modern and Liz had been encouraged by the students' teacher to challenge the group. Yet the comment reveals how an artist educator sees it as essential that individuals' personal (what Liz refers to as 'experience based') responses are confronted and extended, if necessary through adopting a didactic, authoritarian position. In this scenario the artist educator is operating not as facilitator, but instead attempting to determine participants' learning.

Tensions between the work's content and the learners' personal associations are also made explicit in this quotation. Liz wants participants to acknowledge the art as being made by particular artists with 'specific and different intents', thereby appearing to prioritise the artist in the meaning making process. Chapter seven examines how artist educators might foreground artistic intention and the issue is returned to below, since it has implications for how learners' interpretations are validated, both by the educators and within the institution more widely.

8.5 Enabling learners to develop meaning and the question of 'wrong' readings

According to the artist educators, the position occupied by the artwork in the interpretive process is crucial. As Michèle says, artworks are:

> The reason [learners] are there. They are not there for me; to be entertained by me... [The artwork] is the experience they are supposed to have.

Learners, according to Michèle are in the gallery to experience the artworks. This view is shared by other gallery educators, notably Burnham & Kai Kee (2005), who stress that their role as educators is to 'enable each visitor to have a deep and distinctive experience of specific artworks' (*Ibid* 2005: 67). In this scenario, meanings are generated through engagement with the object, hence the primacy placed on the act of looking.

But what aspect of artworks are learners engaging with? The Tate Method outlined in the previous chapter identifies three frameworks through which to develop interpretations. These address the formal qualities of works, the content and the context of its production and reception (Charman et al, 2006). Each of these are mediated through the viewers' 'personal and social circumstances' (Ibid, 2006: 58) and, as noted above, the method foregrounds plurality and personal interpretations. The language suggests fluidity and negotiated meaning making between learner and artwork. Yet Esther's quotation above indicates there is some relatively fixed knowledge (in this case about Rothko) which is most likely the preserve of the artist

educator. It is hence not subject to revision (as Friere (1973) advocates) but rather imparted to learners.

Furthermore, Liz also implies above that a consideration of artistic intents as manifest in the artwork is a crucial element of meaning making in the gallery. In chapter five I examine how artists construct the artwork as embodying knowledge (Prentice, 2000(b), Refsum, 2002, Sullivan, 2005). I also note that other gallery educators view the interchange between knowledge embodied in the artwork, the personal knowledge of the viewer and additional information that occurs during the interpretive process as determining how meanings emerge (Lachapelle *et al*, 2003). Outlined in previous chapters are the tensions around reconstructing artistic intention, yet Liz appears to subscribe to the view that artworks embody artists' decisions and intentions which viewers need to acknowledge.

Existing discourses connected to a work are thus positioned as central to participants' emerging interpretations and it is arguable that learners at Tate are discouraged from building responses which diverge radically from these discourses. Relevant concerns are raised by Borzello (1995) who argues there is a difference between plural interpretations and artworks being 'made to bear meanings that are not there' (*Ibid*, 1995: 7). Thus she appears to support Esther and Liz's view that knowledge intrinsic to artworks must be addressed when building interpretations.

The recognition of theoretical concepts when developing interpretations has implications for co-constructive aspects of learning, as the educator becomes the 'expert' responsible for transmitting that knowledge. It also suggests interpretations that fail to acknowledge such knowledge could be deemed 'erroneous'. As Toby Jackson acknowledges:

> So somewhere within the process of looking at the artwork there is a pulling back from validating all responses, and somewhere there is a connection with cultural discourses that have shaped the work and the meanings associated with it. (Jackson in Jackson & Meecham, 1999: 42)

This acknowledgment of a 'pulling back from validating all responses' highlights the authority of art, the institution and the artist educators and whether or not this authority is open to challenge. It raises questions regarding the gallery's learner-centred approach, since it suggests that determining meaning is ultimately the responsibility of Tate Modern as discharged through the educators. Equally, the validation of certain legitimised responses potentially leaves the gallery open to charges of promulgating 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1980), which, as described in chapter one, can be seen as the non-violent imposition by a dominant class of their systems of meaning, or culture, onto a subordinated group. Symbolic violence occurs through a groups' complicity in the process; hence in this context a collaborative rather than transmission model of learning can prove equally effective.

Whilst acknowledging that the notion of 'validating' responses is problematic, my experience of the practice, observations of artist educators and analysis of the interview data, leads me to consider that the actual exchange between artist educators and learners is too specific and sophisticated to be usefully generalised or adequately 'explained' by a concept such as symbolic violence. For example, I asked interviewees if they considered there were 'wrong' readings of a work and whether they needed to steer learners away from such interpretations. Their responses reveal the many aspects of the issue and suggest how participants can retain ownership of their learning whilst accommodating external cultural discourses. Indicative of the artist educators' responses are these from Michaela and then Michèle:

> I don't think there is a right reading, but.. there are a group of areas of meaning that you can ascribe to a work. It would be ridiculous to say that I can ascribe any meaning to any work of art, because it just wouldn't function and as soon as you get a group of people together you see those meanings emerge and you might just be fortunately contingent.
>
> Do you come clean and say at some point, 'no Cubism wasn't about that, it was about this.' Do you correct them?... Again I think it's possibly a strength and subtlety that we have as artist educators that you can bring it back round and it's very much about the kind of language that you use. I'm very careful never to say 'no that's wrong'. But you can say 'well that's very interesting, but the way that I look at it is...'

Both artist educators suggest that, although there are not necessarily wrong readings their responsibility to the art work and awareness of its theoretical context, shape their interaction with learners and direction of the interpretive process. In ideal learning scenarios, they do not correct a participant's interpretation overtly, but provide guidance and information and encourage individuals within the group to share and discuss their individual understandings. Thus learners' interpretations, both as a group and individually, are shaped through collaborative exchange. In particular the language that artist educators employ during group dialogues allow individuals to develop a shared interpretation that has been tested with the artist educator, amongst the learners and against the artwork.

'Testing' an interpretation against the artwork brings rigour to the interpretive process (Charman & Ross, 2005) and acts as a counter to charges of relativism that can render interpretations meaningless (Raney, 2003). The artwork is central to the meaning making process, providing a democratic space for sharing ideas, as Michaela articulates:

> There's this whole idea of the artwork as a mid-point that can mediate a discussion. Like 'well what do you think and what do I think' and how we can... encounter each other with the artwork as a kind of mid-point.... It can act as a forum for discussion that can trigger off all kinds of ideas.... Art is a forum where you can exchange ideas in a much more non-hierarchical way.

The art object anchors the dialogue and provides a reference point for experimenting with ideas. Michaela deems it non-hierarchical since the form and content of works are ultimate arbitrators of meaning, rather than the relative knowledge viewers bring to a discussion. This foregrounding of the artwork shapes how artist educators work, as Michèle describes:

> If I feel things are going way off, often what you come back to is what is the experience we are getting around it? You... divert back into what can we see for ourselves; let's work it out on the basis of how the artwork is speaking to us. There is always your friend the artwork and again even if you have missed the mark and you are looking at the damn thing thinking 'what is it?' you just bring everybody back to look at the evidence.

By placing the artwork at the centre, Michèle suggests that learners' experiences are informed by what it communicates and this, in turn, determines how interpretations are built. In their text examining Tate Modern's Summer Institute for Teachers, Charman & Ross (2004), also identify the artwork as a fulcrum; it possesses a 'single viewpoint' against which learners' multiple interpretations 'need to be tested' (*Ibid*, 2004: 7). For these educators, pedagogy in the gallery encourages plural meanings, but each derives from the experience of the work and is only justifiable in terms of what the work evidences.

In this respect, according to Alison Cox, the approach adopted within Art into Life sessions resembles that taken by art historians. As she says:

> [Both are based] as much on the evidence that they see in the artworks themselves, as on other forms of knowledge - i.e. the analysis of the artwork itself if of prime importance (email response, February 2007).

This suggests that, as Borzello (1995) noted, meanings may be considered inappropriate if they have not been 'read out' of the art work, but rather 'read in' from the viewer. In other words, viewers' interpretations are ultimately deemed valid if they can be supported by the evidence presented by a work. Meanings derived from an individual's personal experience or knowledge that cannot be sustained by the work itself are problematic. This issue has implications for the status of differing interpretations, but can be productively considered by returning to the aims of the community programme.

8.5.1 Revisiting the aims of the community programme

The community programme seeks to provide a pedagogic space where participants' views can be heard and interpretations supported. Its learner-centred aspirations suggest that individual readings should be accommodated, even if they do not correspond to familiar orthodoxy. As Alison acknowledges:

> If a child has come, and most people don't come to a gallery as part of their daily lives, and they see a rabbit in an abstract painting and they're hugely full of pride that they have seen that and they have expressed that opinion and

> they think 'my goodness that was a fantastic.... I loved looking at that, I'll come back.' Well that is another thing and it's equally important.

Through engaging with work and voicing their ideas, Alison implies, the young viewer has gained in confidence and connected with the institution. This, as much as their understanding of the intrinsic characteristics of art, is a valuable response and therefore should have validity within the institution. The interview data suggests that the artist educators agree with this view; acknowledging that if a learner has engaged with a work, but developed an interpretation which does not correspond with the generally accepted discourse, they would not necessarily correct them.

More important is participation in the process of looking and taking time to reflect in order to develop an interpretation. Therefore, although artist educators may recognise that certain readings are 'wrong', they are tolerant of these differences. Here Liz gives a further example:

> For instance, with Anselm Keifer, with 'Lilith' (See figure 8.1), I find people start seeing all sorts of things in there, like faces which myself I can't see and I'm pretty sure Keifer has not intended, but I feel that.... if they are drawn to look, if they are drawn to notice more than they first.. because most people say that if they were looking round on their own they wouldn't have given it a second chance, well I'm not going to start saying this is not about a figurative painting. I'm delighted that they have entered the space of 'Lilith'.

Figure 8.1 Anselm Keifer 'Lilith' (1987-9)

By emphasising the process of engagement over ultimate meaning, Liz intimates that her preoccupation is with giving learners the skills and confidence to interpret works, rather than specific interpretations. These are the 'tools for looking'. Yet it is also evident that artist educators and education curators do not set out to validate every response and work towards anchoring learners' interpretations to the art work itself. Therefore in contrast to Alison's comment above, Lucy says:

> What worries me sometimes is [the learners] have gone away from it and they say, with a big smile on their face, 'But it's whatever you think of it. Art is whatever.' And I'm thinking, no I've failed.... I don't want to be saying 'the artist wants you to know this', because the edges are not that firm, but the artist wanted to do this and then this and then this. Can you see where they have made that? And wherever he or she has reached, that is their intention, but you can interpret that in your way.

Ideally for Lucy individual responses take account of art objects and artists' decision making processes, rather than exist independently. As her final comment identifies, meaning resides where learners' knowledge and experience connect with the work. She sees her role as brokering connections, but not determining interpretations.

In chapter seven I consider David's critique of the community education programme's methodology and in particular how it does not locate viewers and artworks in relation to cultural or art historical discourses. Absent in Lucy's comment above is reference to the wider cultural and theoretical contexts of an artworks' production and reception, which suggests David's perception is accurate. Yet Liz and Michèle are aware of the importance of learners becoming aware of broader social and political issues that shape how art is made and displayed and that the context of the learning experience is made explicit.

Within the confines of a 90 minute session Liz encourages learners to engage with the institution critically so that they do 'not just consume, but notice and reflect on what they see and feel and begin to process it'. She also uses her knowledge of the collection to challenge 'the canon of knowledge that people have; that they think it's

all dead white men and it mostly is, but not entirely'. Michèle concurs, suggesting that:

> There are degrees to which [the artist educator] could be quite subversive in terms of deconstructing the power of the organisation with a particular group if that is what they are interested in talking to you about. (Group interview)

By making explicit the gallery context and potentially deconstructing the institution, Michèle identifies a critical element to her pedagogy. She and Liz suggest that gallery education practice can raise questions and enable visitors to make meaning independently. In doing so, they echo the model of cultural democracy advocated within community arts practice (see chapter one). However, it appears that unlike community arts practice, contemporary gallery education's foremost rationale is not critical engagement with cultural practices, but fostering learner engagement. For example Michèle describes how she discusses cultural politics if that is what the group is interested in; her focus is learners' preoccupations. Therefore whereas an educator like David is interested in engaging with theoretical discourses exclusively, for Michèle such engagement is for the purpose of enriching learners' meaning making. As a result her pedagogy may include a critical element, but arguably it is limited in its application.

Liz's comment above stresses the importance of reflection; she encourages participants to think about what they have experienced. Lucy also advocates allowing learners to reflect:

> I think you have to allow the groups to reflect.. and sometimes you just finish the workshop and forget the plenary. But now I try and make a really simple point at the end of the session I say 'Ok, what are you going to take away with you today?' It could be anything, could be a memory.

Whilst not specifying what learners should reflect on, Lucy acknowledges the value of allowing time for review. My observations of AiL sessions (as described in the narrative) indicate that individual and group reflection typically focuses on content. In line with the experiential learning model alluded to in chapter five (see figure 5.2) participants also articulate what they have learnt. For example at times during a session participants may describe how they are aware that photographs provoke a

different response than paintings. During the group dialogue, comments such as these provide a basis from which the educator encourages the learner to apply their learning. The exchange described in narrative, where Michaela confirms the learner's observation that the artist's positioning of the nude model shapes our understanding of the painting, and then goes on to suggest the learner remember this issue when looking at other portraits in the future, exemplifies this process.

However, although I observed participants articulating what they had learnt, the research participants do not allude to this important stage in the learning process during the interviews. This suggests that opportunities for individuals to embed their learning are being overlooked. Furthermore, as identified in this and chapter seven, artist educators aim to provide learners with meaning making skills and confidence; with tools for looking. Hence in the following chapter I examine the potential for expanding group reflection to include a focus on the learning process itself. In other words, addressing the ways in which participants have learnt as well as what they have taken on. I argue there that formalising this 'meta-learning' within artist-led pedagogy anchors participants' experiences and provides wider learning strategies, which correspond with the community programme's aspirations.

8.6 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has examined how artist educators enable learners to make meanings informed by personal experience and knowledge and deriving from their encounter with artworks, their peers, artist educators and curators. It has identified that this process develops through the dialogic exchange between learners, with the artworks acting as a fulcrum against which ideas are 'tested'. It notes that interviewees perceive learning to be a constructive process where original ideas are developed through looking, sharing ideas and reflection, although they do not appear to acknowledge the importance of making learning explicit, despite evidence to suggest that this happens during AiL sessions. The pedagogic process culminates in the

provisional realisation of a group interpretation within which individual learners' conceptual understandings co-exist.

The chapter has considered how artist educators' pedagogy supports the aims of the community education programme, but has also interrogated where tensions arise. Notably it has identified why the dialogic exchange can break down and how, despite artist educators' resistance to the term 'teaching', they sometimes adopt more didactic roles. At the same time artist educators' affinity with the art making process leads them to foreground the contested issue of artists' intention. Whereas the Tate method is typically described as 'learner-centred', my analysis reveals that pedagogy derives from learners, artworks and artist educators. Each of these three protagonists shapes the process and outcomes of the learning process.

Building on the analysis here, in the following chapter I examine connections between learning in the gallery and the art making process. I highlight how both are modes of investigation, wherein artist and learners are active makers of meaning and revisit the dialogic relationship between artwork, artist educator and learner to construct a framework for artist-led practice within contemporary gallery education.

9. Re-examining key themes and looking to the future

9.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together research findings and considers the implications for future gallery education theory and practice. The thesis' two central preoccupations are art making and artist-led gallery-based pedagogy. Interrogating these practices and making connections between them explicit, provides insights into how artist educators work with learners and artworks in the gallery and what they seek to achieve. This is significant because previously detailed analysis of the relationship between art making and artist-led pedagogy has been insubstantial. The analysis also suggests why, as artist educators, these practitioners work in specific ways. This chapter draws out implications from these findings for me (an artist, educator and researcher), artist educators in the gallery, gallery education and an academic community more widely.

I begin by outlining some issues and challenges which emerged within the thesis' trajectory. I return to the research participants' perceptions of themselves as artists to consider how these constructions shape pedagogy in the gallery. This analysis informs the framework of Making Meaning in the Gallery (MMG) I have constructed, which delineates the relationship between artist educator, learner and artwork and process of interactive meaning making in the gallery. The final sections outline how this framework and thesis findings can support gallery educators, curators, policy makers, educationalists and artists and inform gallery education practice. My own learning process and plans for future research and dissemination are also outlined.

9.3 Developments and challenges within the research process

This thesis crosses several discipline boundaries. It brings together separate areas of practice, art making and pedagogy, drawing connections where possible, but also recognising difference. The research emerges from my experiences of art practice

and gallery education and draws on some aspects of art history, cultural theory, education theory and literature relating to the construction of the professional. This hybridism reflects the eclecticism of art and gallery education practice and has enabled a variety of perspectives to inform the analysis. Each different field is relevant to the research since they also inform the activities under investigation. Gallery education practice itself draws on art history, and cultural and education theory, whilst previous examinations of art practice have referenced, for example, the concept of the reflective practitioner (Prentice, 2000a). The disparate literature has added to the research venture in positive ways and I have taken support from Patrick Dunleavy's assertion that:

> The fringes of disciplines are often the most productive areas for new approaches. It is here that scholars are often most actively borrowing or adapting ideas developed in one discipline to do work in another (*Ibid*, 2003: 40)

Yet adapting ideas from multiple disciplines also has potential drawbacks. Artists have been described as 'inveterate cultural borrowers who harvest ideas from the whole realm of human experience' (Charman *et al*, 2006: 53), which chimes with how the research participants' relationship to theory is portrayed in this thesis, specifically in chapter four. Here artists are seen to draw on different concepts selectively, if and when they are useful to develop their ideas, rather than to acquire broad knowledge of a particular subject. I see the artists' eclectic approach as relevant to my examination of literature, since I have not limited my reading to a specific field, but drawn on ideas that advanced my thinking productively.

However, I am also aware of the dangers of selectivity and have striven to contextualise and problematise my arguments throughout; an approach that does not necessarily emerge naturally from my background and training as an artist. I have been helped by ongoing dialogue with the research participants, which has allowed me to interrogate ideas and consider alternative viewpoints. The contradictory perspectives given by the education curators at times have also provided valuable alternative perspectives to those presented by artist educators. These perceptions,

alongside more discriminating texts, have widened my thinking and encouraged me to adopt more critical approaches to the case study data.

As a result the thesis has revealed gaps between, in the first instance, the research participants' perceptions of their role and practice in the gallery and my understanding of it, based on analysis of the interview data and observation of education sessions. Equally there are divergences between the literature describing this form of gallery education practice (both produced from within Tate Modern and more generally) and pedagogy in the gallery as portrayed here. For instance, the discourse of learner-centred pedagogy in the gallery underestimates, in my view, the contribution of artworks and artist educators to developing meaning and generating new knowledge. These disjunctions are described below.

Equally, framing meaning making in the gallery exclusively in terms of the impact on learners (as the discourse of gallery education typically does) tends to preclude consideration of how this pedagogic process can be understood as 'learning-centred' as well as 'learner-centred'. Learning-centred approaches make explicit the processes as well as the content of meaning making to enable learners to examine and reflect on how they learn best and develop strategies for future effective learning (Watkins *et al*, 2007). Customarily gallery education practice is not described according to a learning-centred discourse. However, my thesis articulates how artist educators' ambitions to enable participants to gain strategies for interpretation chime with a focus on learning processes, as well as content, but that this focus on processes is not made explicit in their practice.

Reflective dialogue amongst artist educators and learners more commonly addresses responses to artworks rather than learning experiences. Hence the opportunity to develop and anchor participants' meaning making skills further is not always grasped. Increasingly I recognise the value of making the learning process itself more explicit with participants, since it connects with what artist educators bring (their knowledge of meaning making strategies acquired through their art practice). It also supports the

community education programme's ambitions to further participants' engagement with the collection through enabling learners to develop interpretive skills they can apply subsequently without the support of the 'expert' teacher. My MMG framework outlined below highlights how a more explicit review of learning processes can enhance artist educators' and learners' experiences.

Discrepancies between practice in the gallery and the rhetoric of social and cultural inclusion also emerge. Notably there appear differences between artist educators' and gallery's objectives for the programme (evident in research participants' comments, my observations and Tate literature) and how gallery education is construed in policy terms. Whilst claims made for the practice by, for example, the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) are typically broad reaching as regards social and cultural effects, the aspirations voiced by research participants and found in Tate texts tend to be concerned primarily (if not exclusively) with engaging learners with artworks and enabling them to feel comfortable in the institution. These findings support my view that examining gallery pedagogy from the perspective of those providing it enables analysis of how such practices can contribute to social and educational policy objectives whilst clarifying potential limits to what gallery education can be expected to achieve.

Coincidentally there is some evidence here that artist educators' skills and knowledge are not fully understood within Tate Modern and possibly beyond. In part this can be attributed to the relative lack of research into teaching processes in the gallery, or the role of educators compared with a greater focus on participant impact. To redress that imbalance, this thesis illuminates artist educators' practice to raise its visibility and clarify its use within cultural, social and education policy. In this way the thesis contributes to wider debates on cultural democracy and creative learning.

9.2.1 The construction of art practice, pedagogy and research as meaning making processes

Over time my research concerns have focused increasingly on the tiered case studies and the refined research questions. I have moved from a broader investigation of artist-led teaching and learning. However, through concentrating on the detailed practices of art making and pedagogy and the artist educators' expertise, it has become more involved. For example, at the start I did not intend to examine artistic process in such detail, but I recognised that without this analysis, any understanding of how it informed pedagogy would be insubstantial. Likewise considering comparisons between art making and research has enriched my understanding of the two practices that are the objects of investigation.

To examine whether artists' expertise equips these practitioners to work with learners and artworks in specific ways, I have interrogated art making and artist-led pedagogy. My analysis identifies art making as a practice and, more specifically, as experiential enquiry stemming from an individual's preoccupations. It embraces reflectivity, complexity and the building of meanings. Similarly the analysis of gallery pedagogy recognises learning as active and reflective; learners draw on their previous experiences to gain understanding and develop new knowledge. My experience of the research process leads me to identify qualitative research in similar terms. It is positioned here as a process of analytical and reflective investigation, informed by the researcher's experience, which involves the construction of new knowledge. Each understanding locates the active generation of new knowledge or meaning making as the rationale for the process; it is a bridge between art making, learning and research and is a central theme throughout this thesis.

Whilst identifying active making meaning as the shared feature, I am also keen to reposition learning away from the reception model (and teaching away from the transmission of knowledge). Given the research participants' resistance to identifying their gallery activities as teaching, I see it as productive to construct a more inclusive

understanding of gallery pedagogy that can be allied to artistic practice. Although not agreeing with interviewees' construction of teaching I wish to recognise a meta-level conception that avoids categorising them as either artists or teachers, but makers of meaning.

Rather than undertaking a broader, but necessarily more superficial study I have concentrated on investigating the different stages and aspects of art practice and artist-led pedagogy in detail. I consider it important that the skills and knowledge that artists bring to their gallery teaching are identified and the benefits and limitations of their approaches made explicit. Comparisons have been drawn between artist practice and pedagogy and, to some extent, research. Differences have been noted in how the outcomes of each process are validated, but my focus has essentially been on exploring comparable processes. Drawing these connections has helped me understand my process as a PhD researcher. I am aware that my experiences as artist, educator and researcher have informed my understanding of the research questions. Ideas and theory have emerged from practice, whilst being developed throughout by analysis of literature and case study data. Equally crucial has been ongoing conversations with artists, educators and researchers, where knowledge has been reconstructed and developed. These exchanges lead me to perceive that, as a PhD researcher, I share aspects of the meaning making process undergone by artists and learners in the gallery.

This 'collaborative' relationship between me and the artist educators and education curators is exemplified by their designation as research participants in the thesis. Yet my views on what constitutes collaboration have shifted. In the early stages of the research I saw my relationship with these 'co-researchers' (as I originally titled them) and artist educators' engagement with learners as largely equal. However, as the thesis progressed I became increasingly aware of differences in relative power and authority between different protagonists in the gallery and the potential difficulty of owning knowledge derived through a nominally shared research process.

Recognising these unequal relationships and different agendas allowed a multi-faceted picture of artist-led pedagogy and research practice to emerge, but led me to question whether either can claim to be wholly collaborative. It caused me to re-define the artist educators as research participants, reflecting their status as significant contributors to my research, rather than equal collaborators. This insight informs my understanding of the research process more broadly and my construction of forms of so-called 'negotiated' art practice (Butler & Reiss, 2007) as well as teaching and learning in the gallery. I am more conscious of how collaborative meaning making is affected by participants' needs, experiences and relative power; the context in which they are operating and the desired outcome for knowledge generated. Within such processes there may be times when participants work co-operatively, but it is too simplistic to describe my research, or artist-led teaching and learning, as a collaboration.

9.2.2 Understanding the artists' fluid role

The examination of the research participants' perceptions of art practice and artist-led pedagogy has revealed the varied activities artists undertake; what they 'do'. The evidence indicates that these practitioners conceive their art making in terms of a conceptual enquiry. Furthermore their expertise enables them to engage with this process effectively; they are familiar with specific working methods and can articulate their ideas through art. Taking these findings into account, my construction of the artist as 'conceptual investigator' shares characteristics with the researcher and active learner. In broad terms each can be seen to engage in an experiential process of 'doing' (looking or gathering information, for example), alongside analysis and reflection to interpret their reality and make meaning. Again I seek to make connections between practice and pedagogy, drawing attention more to them both as modes of enquiry rather than discreet disciplines, as this is significant in terms of the ways artists engage with learners and artworks, but also what they are seeking to 'teach'.

A looser and potentially cross-disciplinary interpretation of art practice chimes with the multiple forms of engagement these artist educators participate in with learners. As revealed by the case study data, their activities include transmitting knowledge and co-learning. Moreover, the practitioners' occupation of different and fluid roles (for example as researchers engaged in their own practice, as active learners alongside workshop participants and as facilitators directing the pace of a gallery session) blurs the boundaries between different practices further. Therefore, rather than identifying the artists according to a generic term such as facilitator I have drawn attention to their varied occupations.

In describing and analysing the artist educators' approaches and activities, strengths and weaknesses have become evident, as have research participants' preconceptions of other professions and their own actions (which I return to below). Also, although this thesis does not examine the perceptions of teachers, community group leaders or learners, other studies identify teachers' misconceptions of gallery educators' practice and gallery education's rationale (Herne, 2006). This thesis intends to enable greater understanding of artist educators' activities and dismantle potentially negative preconceptions that can prohibit productive exchange between sectors. Understanding art practice and pedagogy as parallel meaning making activities and the artist as occupying varied roles reconciles differences and establishes common ground upon which to interrogate (and reveal) gallery education practice at Tate Modern.

9.2.3 Constructing the artist and the artist educator; the significance of practitioner knowledge

So what has this thesis uncovered concerning artists' expertise and how it translates into particular encounters with learners and artworks? Emerging strongly is the research participants' perception of artistic knowledge (which I identify as resembling 'practitioner' knowledge (Eraut, 1994)) as informed by and revealed through practice. As such, this knowledge is experiential, dynamic and contextualised. Also apparent

is the extent to which artistic knowledge informs the ways artist educators engage with learners and negotiate meanings in relation to art objects. It also impacts on how artist educators are perceived within Tate Modern.

In the first instance artists are perceived to be familiar with the ways artists work and with the processes of art production. Within the gallery this translates into pedagogy that foregrounds the experience of the artwork. Artist educators focus on the object. They encourage learners to draw on their experiences and look closely to develop meanings by analysing what they can see and considering how artworks have come into being. The case study data reveals that artists are seen to be well equipped to facilitate this process for learners, as the skills of looking attentively, questioning, reflecting and making meaning are intrinsic to their art practice. Artists are also perceived to be accustomed to looking at artworks in this way themselves.

However by asserting the primacy of the object in shaping meaning, artist educators are adopting a specific approach to generating interpretations which arguably downplays the significance of the social and cultural conditions of a work's production and reception. Although there is some evidence that these educators do acknowledge wider cultural and art historical discourses, their focus is on supporting learners to generate meanings that are relevant to their lives, so typically contextual information is introduced selectively. These artists familiarise participants with wider theory and promote subject specific knowledge acquisition primarily for learners to construct individual (and group) interpretations. Again it is artists' own experience, in this case of looking at works in order to progress their practice exclusively, that informs their negotiation of the art object with learners. But in this latter instance there is a perception by education curators that artists' approaches risk being too narrow. Hence there is a need for artist educators to broaden their frames of reference with learners.

Yet in the context of an Art into Life programme where typically learners are new to the gallery the artist educators' focus on the object chimes with the community

programme's aims to foster participants' engagement with the collection. By locating the object as the ultimate arbiter of meaning, the artist educators provide a rigorous interpretive framework for learners with varying levels of knowledge. The interpretive process can be seen as democratic, as each learner is deemed to have an equal, but different experience of a work that is not ranked by the extent of their art historical or philosophical knowledge, for example.

However, if artist educators do not highlight the conditions of objects' production and reception, it is arguable that the potential for critical engagement with the cultural institution and the dominant discourses of art production is lost. These artist educators are aware of the need to draw attention to the significance of the gallery context in determining meaning, but it is debatable whether they adopt radically critical positions. There are indications that research participants locate learners as active makers of meaning and participants in the creative process (which corresponds with the construction of individuals within the 'cultural democracy' (Kelly, 1985) concept advanced by community arts practitioners). Yet a process redolent of the 'democratising' of culture, whereby the gallery message is transmitted relatively unchallenged to learners also appears to exist within Tate Modern. At times the artist educators appear to be negotiating a delicate balance between the two.

An area where the artist educators appear to concur with Tate Modern discourse is in the primacy of the artist. For example, each of these education practitioners acknowledges artists' contributions to art objects' meanings. Returning to the interviewees' construction of how artists' knowledge is 'transformed' within the art object gives insights into why. Research participants' responses were mixed, with Lucy most straightforward in acknowledging that an artist's decision making process significantly affects the artwork's form. Michèle and Esther, however, are more ambiguous. Whilst describing how artworks they make inform their ongoing practice and communicate their ideas to others, they stress that these objects do not represent a definitive statement. Instead their work poses questions and is subject to multiple interpretations. It appears these two artists perceive their knowledge is

revealed in their art, but this embodied knowledge does not equate to a work's only meaning.

The research participants all acknowledge how 'artistic intention' contributes to artworks' meanings, whilst being aware of the theoretical complexities surrounding the recreation of this for viewers in the gallery. As artists they experience their knowledge undergoing transformation within the art object and draw on this when working with learners. They recognise the artist's input into the form and content of art and seek to convey this to learners. I am aware that there are echoes here of the Modernist construction of the art object as the output of the singular creative individual (Greenberg, 1940). Although not acknowledged explicitly by the research participants, this construction appears to surface in each of the interviewees who are practicing artists' descriptions of their own art practice. In this way the research participants' understanding of artists and their artistic experience shapes how they develop meaning in the gallery.

Foregrounding the artist and the knowledge embodied in artworks has implications for gallery pedagogy that are not always acknowledged in the texts describing Tate Modern's community programme or perhaps acknowledged by research participants. As alluded to above, commonly Tate education literature describes the gallery methodology as 'Learner-centred'. Yet there is evidence that artist educators negotiate between learners and art objects and Lucy, for one, considers she has 'failed' if learners do not acknowledge artists' contributions. These educators do not seek to radically critique the construction of the artist as located within the gallery. Arguably, therefore, Tate pedagogy is as much artwork-centred as learner-centred.

Artists are also understood by research participants to be adept at negotiating several, potentially conflicting ideas simultaneously and to feel comfortable with uncertainty. This echoes the fluidity and instability they experience in their own art practice and is evident in the Art Making Model. These artist educators allow plurality within their pedagogy, most notably by encouraging learners to develop individual

interpretations within a group. The interview data and observations evidence how research participants balance learners' multiple, and at times conflicting meanings. This negotiation seeks to foster participants' engagement with the artwork. Through 'managing' the group dialogue these educators also enable participants to build on their initial interpretations by questioning and taking on board different ideas expressed within a group. Yet there is evidence that at times the artist educators dominate the discussion. If the group dialogue does not develop or the artist educator perceives their authority is being undermined they can become more didactic and controlling. In such circumstances the possibility for learners to generate plural meanings is reduced.

Understanding artistic knowledge as a form of practitioner knowledge is also relevant in terms of how artist educators' practice is perceived within Tate Modern. Scott *et al*'s (2004), analysis of how knowledge is hierarchical gives insights into why artist educators' more experiential knowledge may not be easily understood and validated within Tate Modern. Artist educators' and community education curators' comments indicate that they perceive that practical and experiential knowledge does not receive equal recognition, or is misconstrued, in comparison with more generalisable theoretical knowledge within Tate Modern. There is some evidence of an hierarchical epistemological scenario existing even within the education department.

However this is an area of the thesis where outstanding questions remain. My perceptions of this hierarchy stem from the case study evidence noted above, but these interviewees represent a small percentage of those employed within Tate Modern. For this research I chose not to interview senior curators or administrators at the gallery, since my focus was the details of artist educators' practice predominantly. Hence I do not have evidence of wide ranging institutional perceptions of artist-led pedagogy to support or dispute the provisional findings outlined here. Further research involving more widespread data collection is needed to ascertain more confidently whether theoretical knowledge is privileged across Tate Modern.

Nonetheless the possible existence of a hierarchical validation of knowledge suggests the cultural inclusion agenda may find resistance within an institution such as Tate. At its most extreme prioritising theoretical knowledge over more experiential knowledge possessed by artists and generated by learners can invalidate knowledge that does not lend itself to generalisation or necessarily contribute to ongoing critical debates surrounding artworks. The discourse of policy documents relating to cultural inclusion suggest the possibility of learners becoming empowered - their voices become audible and their needs acknowledged by the gallery - by engaging with art. However, unless the epistemological scenario within the institution recognises knowledge beyond the theoretical, there is a danger that learners' perspectives do not penetrate beyond the education workshop. As noted above, the remit of this research does not extend to an examination of how the community programme, for example, affects the workings of Tate Modern. A further study centred on learners and the wider institution is required to illuminate these issues.

9.2.4 Considering the construction of the artist educator in contrast with other professionals

A central concern of the thesis is the ways in which artist educators bring expertise derived from experiencing art making to teaching in the gallery. As an artist and educator I recognise this happens, but needed clarification from the interview data and literature. Describing their role in the gallery, Michèle, Liz, Esther and Michaela actively seek recognition as 'artist' educators and ally themselves with the process of making art as represented in the artworks. However, also evident in interviews is research participants' construction of themselves as educators (to varying degrees) in contrast with other professionals. Their comments reveal particular preconceptions and aid my understanding of them as educators. For instance, whereas Michaela, Esther, Liz and Michèle identify that artists operate fluidly, negotiating varied interpretations with learners, they perceive that professionals whose expertise derives from art historical knowledge are less likely to ground interpretations in the learners' experience of the artwork.

As this thesis did not set out to provide a comparative study between artist educators and other professional educators I cannot identify whether research participants' perceptions are shared by art historians. However, I am keen to avoid polarising artists and art historians, since this would ignore the frequent overlaps and shared practices between the two. Furthermore, although research participants consider their expertise lends itself to more open and inclusive pedagogy, potential limitations to its application exist. These artist educators place a premium on the experiential, as they do in their practice. Yet, as David the education curator argues, an equally valid place exists for learning programmes that do not stem from learners' individual experiences, and address art historical, philosophical and cultural discourses surrounding work exclusively. In these scenarios artists' more experiential approaches would not necessarily be appropriate or effective.

Alongside their differentiation from art historians, the research participants (apart from Esther) resist describing themselves as teachers and construct themselves as facilitators and co-learners. For Michèle particularly, teachers transmit knowledge to learners, but artists engage in active and potentially collaborative processes with learners. However, this presents a narrow view of teaching, limited to the transmission model rather than the broader construction of teaching which I subscribe to. Since the interview data and my observations reveal that artist educators intermittently engage in transmitting knowledge, instructing and managing, and given that these artist educators appear to do more than facilitate and co-learn, it became increasingly important to interrogate why this resistance to teaching exists.

To understand this resistance I re-examined art practice as a meaning making process and the connections between art making and learning. There is some evidence to suggest that the attributes of effective learners (for example being active and strategic, skilled in developing goals, reflecting on and understanding their own learning (Watkins *et al*, 1996)) are shared by artists. This illuminates why artists might resist describing themselves as teachers. For example, comments by Michèle, Liz and Michaela indicate they approach their work in the gallery more from the

perspective of the learner who is keen to make meaning. Positioning themselves as the didact who imposes or transmits is counter to their experience as artists. Therefore, although their resistance to seeing their practice in terms of more transmissive modes of teaching reveals itself in somewhat prejudicial juxtapositions with teachers, I see it stemming more from their allegiance to an experiential artistic practice. And whilst recognising teaching as more than transmission might alter their perceptions, at present it appears these artists see themselves as more akin to learners than teachers.

9.4 Examining the gallery context

The analysis of how research participants construct themselves as educators also illuminates whether alternative factors such as the gallery context determine artist educators' pedagogic activities. I chose Tate Modern as the case study because it has a specific and well articulated education framework and sanctioned methodology. By examining Tate's methods I aimed to identify whether it is the gallery context, in addition to (or rather than) their status as artists, which shapes artists' teaching and learning in the gallery.

What emerges is that the community education programme at Tate Modern provides a specific experience which can be seen to differ from art education, particularly in non-gallery contexts. Notably participants have the opportunity to engage with an educator who is different to their customary group leader or teacher. They are learning for a short, intense period in an informal environment, which brings benefits and challenges. For example, chapter six describes how the relatively large group of plumbers could move through the gallery and engage with a range of works, yet were also interrupted by other visitors, whilst the artist educator faced the challenge of maintaining their interest. The diverse makeup of this group, whose common feature was their participation in a non-art NVQ course, is also characteristic of the variety of learners typically found within community education sessions, each of whom may have diverse expectations. Finally the programme's desired outcome of fostering

learner engagement results in greater emphasis being placed on participant enjoyment rather than specific learning outcomes, such as would be case in formal education.

In other respects, however, investigating the influence of gallery context has proved inconclusive. In particular it is difficult to identify clearly how artist educators' practice is shaped by Tate methodology; or whether because the Tate's approaches were originally developed by artists in part, they complement activities these artist educators would use anyway. For instance, Liz and Michèle describe how their education practice evolved prior to working at Tate. They also reference varied influences from their personal politics to the practice of artists working in community arts and elsewhere. Yet they use terms, such as 'tools for looking', outline techniques and follow a particular format for sessions which derive from Tate's 'Ways In' framework (Charman *et al*, 2006). Each research participant also describes being supported by the Tate approach, yet simultaneously wanting to challenge and deconstruct it. This suggests that Tate methodology is affected by and informs how artist educators work. The relationship is both symbiotic yet generates tension.

Further constructive layering was added to this question by the presence of Lucy Wilson as a research participant. Lucy's background is originally in theatre and she has no fine art training, although she comes from a family of artists. Although interested to identify whether Lucy brought a different approach from other research participants who were artists, I found limited evidence to suggest this. This could indicate that Tate's structured methodology shapes practice more than an individual practitioner's skills and expertise. However, Lucy had extensive experience of gallery education prior to joining Tate Modern. It appears it is her close relationship with artists and previous work with artists and teachers, as much as Tate itself that informs her engagement with learners and the collection. Therefore, although recognising parallels between the 'Ways In' framework and the approaches adopted by artist educators, I am not able to state categorically whether one determines the other. Instead the evidence suggests that working within Tate's methodology allows artist

educators to utilise their specific skills and knowledge. At the same time this expertise shapes the teaching and learning and supports the community programme's desired outcomes.

9.4.1 The pedagogic process in the gallery: developing a framework of meaning making

To clarify and extend artist-led pedagogic processes I have constructed the following framework. The Meaning Making in the Gallery (MMG) framework draws on findings from this thesis and is informed by literature on learning in cultural spaces (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2005, Charman *et al*, 2006, Lachapelle *et al*, 2003), experiential learning models (Kolb, 1983, Dennison & Kirk,1990) and the Art Making model. The MMG framework describes a process of making meaning in the gallery and is formulated in three stages. The first stage (Figure 9.1) identifies the characteristics of the three components - the learners, artist educator and artwork and describes how they interact in the gallery. The second stage (Figure 9.2) draws on an experiential learning cycle (Figure 5.2) to describe the active meaning making processes undertaken by learners and artist educators and how these processes are shaped by the artwork. The third stage (Figure 9.4) introduces a further 'meta-learning' element, where participants reflect on their processes of learning explicitly.

Recognising how gallery education literature privileges the constructive learning framework, I was drawn to Dennison and Kirk's (1990) experiential learning model (see figure 5.2) since the components and processes of learning appear similar to my experience of art practice. I also recognise how a process of 'do, review, learn, apply' (*Ibid*, 1990) resembles in broad terms the active and reflective processes described by research participants and articulated in the Art Making model. However, the experiential model is 'content' free. It does not describe the components of art practice as portrayed by research participants (and found in relevant texts) or delineated in the Art Making model. Active looking, gathering information and physical making, which are partnered by ongoing critical reflection in art making as

understood in this thesis are not identified. Likewise the 'do, review, learn, apply' cycle does not account for the art object; how it manifests the knowledge and understanding of the artist and informs her or his ongoing practice. The reflexivity and intricacy evident in the Art Making model, where numerous connections are made between stages, is not in the experiential model.

Therefore the experiential learning model establishes how art making can be understood broadly as an experiential meaning making process but does not provide a sufficiently specific or comprehensive framework to be utilised unaltered in this context. My analysis of gallery pedagogy builds on broad analogies I have established between art practice and learning; both are active processes of enquiry. The MMG framework draws on experiential learning models, but specifically addresses artist-led pedagogy.

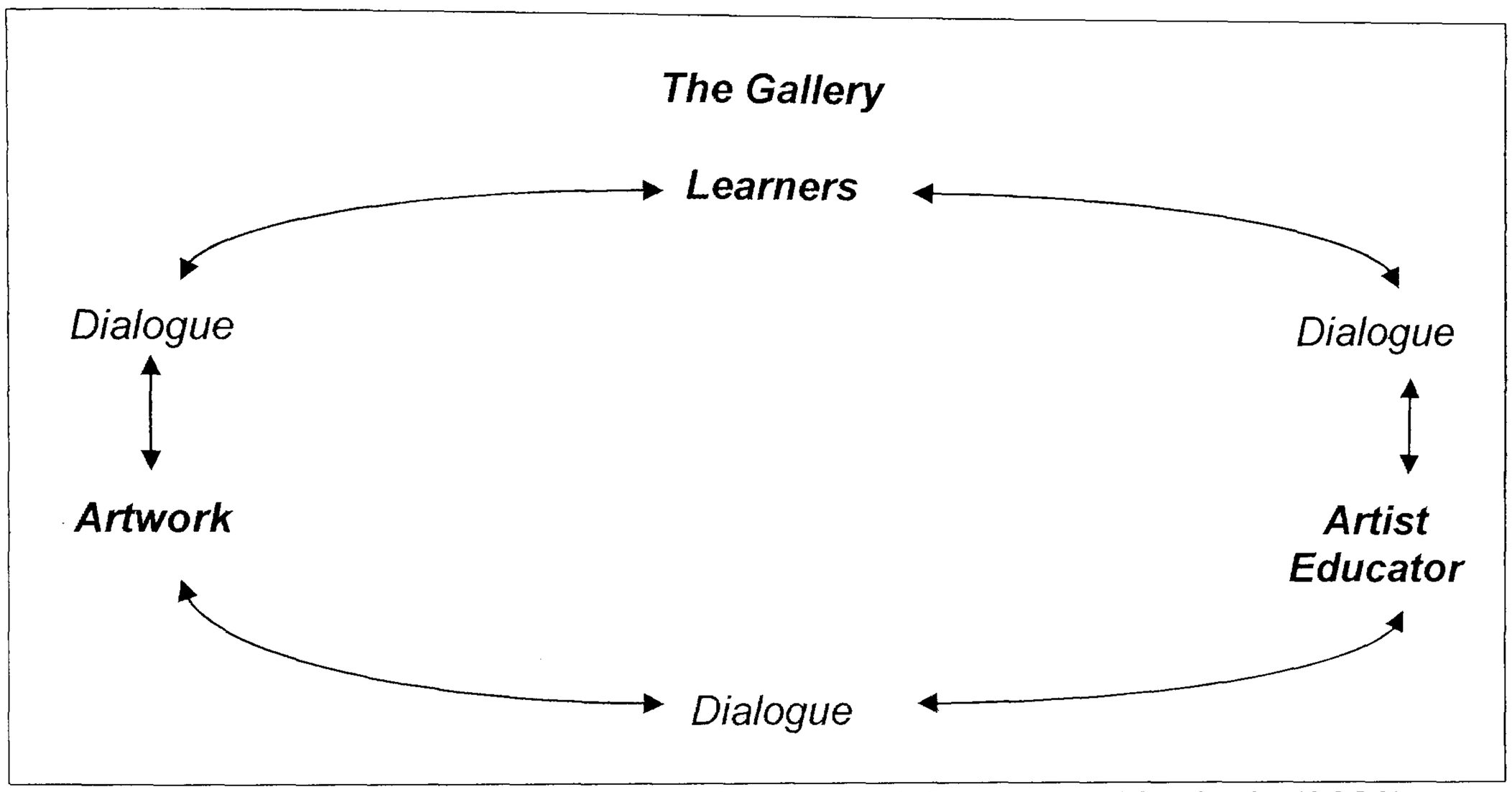
I have constructed the framework for four reasons; first to draw together findings and second to make the relationship between learners, artist educators and artworks explicit. Third, the framework articulates a making meaning process. Therefore, unlike the experiential learning model, participants and activities are delineated and dialogic exchange acknowledged. Finally, the framework draws attention to the additional value of formalising reflection on learning. It is intended to demonstrate how effective learning can be fostered. In this way the MMG framework brings together disparate aspects of learning in the gallery and articulates the value of meta-learning; neither of which have been undertaken in previous gallery education research. The following section outlines the model itself and identifies issues arising from this thesis which may limit its successful implementation.

9.4.1 Stage One

Stage One of the MMG framework (Figure 9.1) identifies that meaning making in **the gallery** is generated through **dialogue** between **learners**, **artist educators** and metaphorically with **artworks**. Meaning making is an active process whereby

knowledge and understanding are created through engagement with, and reflection on, experience. Key aspects of making meaning include activity, as learners (and artists) participate in various tasks and processes. Equally significant is the focus on creation and reflection. Meaning (which comprises both knowledge and understanding) is generated through a combination of creativity and reflection that stems from the individual's engagement with their previous and ongoing experience.

Figure 9.1 Stage One of the MMG framework



In this framework, as with Anderson's (1999) and Carnell and Lodge's (2002) descriptions, **dialogue** is a dynamic generative conversation which promotes critical investigation, reflection, analysis and the reorganisation of knowledge. Dialogue allows for risk taking and the sharing and questioning of ideas and hence gives space to all voices. Within the MMG framework dialogue enables knowledge brought to the meaning making experience by artwork, learner and artist educator to be accommodated, but also reviewed and reconstructed.

In the MMG framework dialogue is differentiated from conversations limited to the sharing of individual experiences or the unchallenged transmission of knowledge from one protagonist to another, since it involves the interrogation and reorganisation of knowledge. Corresponding with the model of co-constructive learning (*Ibid*, 2002), individuals learn together, generating knowledge and understandings they would not

achieve alone. Thus dialogue involves artist educators questioning their own knowledge and taking on board learners' ideas and views, whilst engaging with artworks. Dialogue between viewers (artist educators and learners) and artwork enables meanings to be generated through negotiation between knowledge embodied in the artwork and the experience and understandings of these viewers.

In chapter four I examined how, during the artistic process, the 'conversational exchange' (Prentice, 1995) between artist and artwork generates understanding and drew attention to an art object's potential to contribute to such dialogue. In this model artworks are not positioned as texts to be read, but contributors to meaning making. Engagement with a work involves participants asking questions of it, but also acknowledging what it communicates and how ideas are shaped by that ongoing communication. In this way the exchange amongst artist educator and learners and between participants and artwork begins as a process of question and answer, but progresses to dialogue, where knowledge is shared and developed.

At Stage One of the MMG model dialogue is centred on the three components; it is learner-centred, artist educator-centred and artwork-centred. In Stage Three (Figure 9.4) a specific and additional form of dialogue between learners and artist educator is identified that addresses the meaning making process itself.

Artworks in the MMG framework

In this framework **artworks** occupy a place equal to that of facilitator and learner. As noted, they embody knowledge in terms of an artist's decisions that result in works taking form and suggesting content in a particular way. Whilst this knowledge does not constitute the only meaning of a work, individual and group interpretations are constructed in part through interrogating what a work presents and the making process. Questions such as 'what is the work made of?' or 'how has the work been made?' can be followed by group consideration of why the artist might have chosen to use that material and how that shapes our understanding. Furthermore the artwork

(rather than artist educators' or curators' expertise) provides an anchor, or benchmark against which meanings are continuously tried out.

Having artworks as the anchor around which meanings are generated and against which interpretations are judged valid provides an inclusive framework. Learners do not need extensive theoretical knowledge; it is not the institutional discourse against which their interpretations are judged, but the object itself. Thus providing they have interrogated a work sufficiently to make a considered judgement; in this framework their reading is legitimate, even if it contradicts more orthodox readings. However, artist educators and learners engage in a delicate task; developing readings which are supportable in terms of the art, without the educator determining those interpretations.

Learners in the MMG framework

In the MMG framework **learners** are active. Their knowledge and experience contribute to individual and group learning experiences. Learners participate fully in the pedagogic process, are encouraged to extend their analytical thinking and take responsibility for their learning. Active means more than 'doing'. Learners act, but also process and reflect on activities and apply meanings made to future action. Arguably, this approach positions the participant as similar to an artist (where theory is used to enhance experiential knowledge predominantly) and downplays more academic approaches to interpretation.

The MMG framework can therefore be usefully employed in gallery education scenarios that aim to enhance learner experience primarily, rather than to contribute to broader theoretical debates. Learners seeking to increase their subject specific knowledge about a work (which might include design students fact-finding about the origins and particular design history of a museum object, for example) could be frustrated by the emphasis on individual engagement promoted by the MMG framework. The model can be seen, therefore to have a specific purpose within the

spectrum of gallery education activities where learning is conceived in a particular way.

To further individual and group engagement, in the MMG framework learning takes place within a 'community of learners' (Watkins, 2005). Emphasis is placed on effective communication, mutual support and encouragement, experimentation and openness and a commitment to achieving shared goals within the group. Participants embark on joint learning activities to achieve these goals of greater engagement with artworks and the gallery. Therefore the group can be differentiated from a 'learning community' (*Ibid*, 2005) (such as is found in therapeutic scenarios) which is focused more on learning about the group itself.

Artist Educators in the MMG framework

Artist educators, like learners, are active and bring knowledge and experience to the pedagogic setting. They participate alongside learners; however their role is multi-faceted. Whilst functioning as co-learners who share and re-order their knowledge, artist educators also model a process of meaning making, which corresponds in many ways to their artistic process. For instance, rather than becoming the 'expert' who transmits theoretical knowledge, artist educators engage in the active processes outlined in Stage Two (figure 9.2); engaging, questioning, sharing knowledge, reflecting, making meaning and applying. They seek to enable learners to develop knowledge and understanding through learning alongside them, not by standing apart transmitting information.

However, artist educators' skills and expertise shape participants' knowledge generation. They direct a session's format and inhabit roles beyond that of facilitator (as outlined in the constructive learning framework). Artist educators guide learners, without becoming authoritarian. In this respect they share characteristics with the 'effective tutor' (Watkins *et al*, 2007). Through dialogic exchange the artist educator asks open questions, is non-judgemental, empathises, listens actively, reflects back and shares insights. Rather than lecture learners, they provide relevant contextual

information to develop learners' thinking and deepen group engagement. In particular artist educators assist learners to engage with the social and political context in which work is made and received and acknowledge the significance of the gallery in shaping how meanings are generated.

In this framework artist educators need to allow learners freedom to explore ideas within the group and share control of the pedagogic scenario to allow dialogue to become learning. The artist educator seeks to enable learners to embark on the active learning cycle and to ensure learning is made explicit. If, however, they feel challenged and slip into defensive teaching modes, learners may not create their own interpretations. Instead dialogue degenerates, learners become passive recipients of information transmitted by the 'expert' artist educator and the pedagogic mode shifts from co-construction to reception. Hence, the balance of power between learners and educators needs to be acknowledged.

The gallery context in the MMG framework

Interpretations are informed by the specific time and place they are made, therefore the MMG framework recognises the influence of socio-cultural and physical contexts. Contrasting with the 'white cube' (O'Doherty, 1999) model of the gallery, where discerning viewers appreciate art unaided, the MMG framework operates comfortably within galleries (and wider policy contexts) that acknowledge the need for accessible and inclusive policies.

The three components of the framework function within **the gallery**, which provides a specific learning environment and affects meanings (hence the importance of gallery educators making this explicit). Broader issues including prevailing policy priorities and social and cultural dynamics are also influential. The physical gallery space, the layout of individual rooms and acoustics affect possible modes of pedagogy. How the education programme is positioned and perceived within the institution is also significant; what is it aiming to achieve and why? A gallery philosophy focused on engendering learner engagement supports this form of artist-led pedagogy.

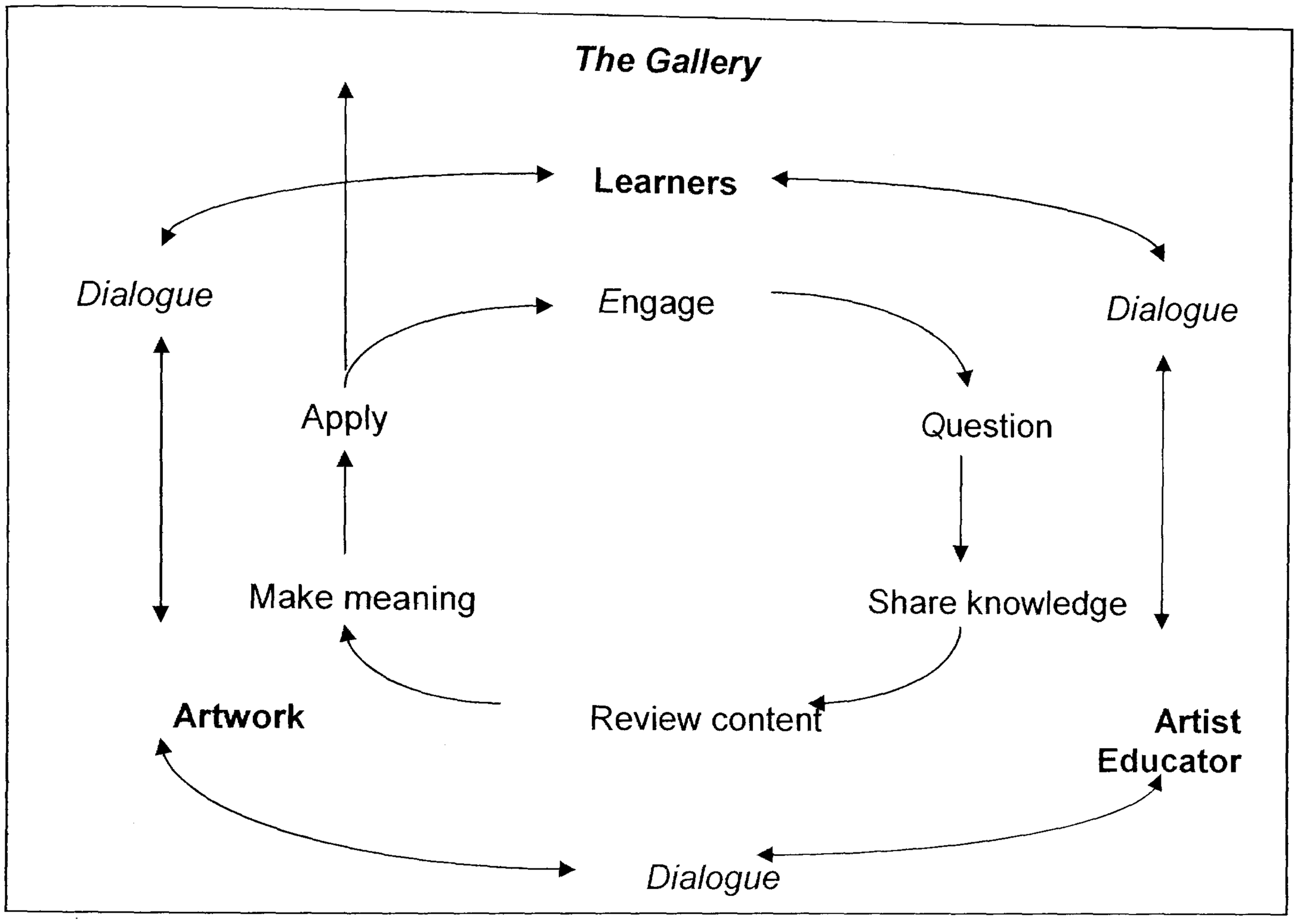
Alternatively a dominant gallery discourse which prioritises the transmission of theoretical knowledge, or the teaching of physical making skills rather than conceptual engagement, might struggle to accommodate the MMG framework.

The character of the collection and the curatorial policy revealed through the display also influences learner experience. Provocative juxtapositions of works can encourage questioning by viewers, allowing for more open and plural pedagogic processes. Arguably a display that outlines the 'progression' of modern art without making the curatorial position explicit does not construct the gallery as a discursive space. The MMG framework functions effectively in galleries which recognise that curatorial decisions represent one of several 'productive fictions' (Jackson, quoted in Meecham and Jackson, 1999) rather than objective facts that surround work.

Less overt forms of gallery policy need to be acknowledged also, as these shape whether visitors are welcomed and permitted to be active learners. The extent to which institutional discourse acknowledges learners' more experiential interpretations gives an indication of whether others in the gallery, such as curators or marketing specialists, see benefit in entering into dialogue with visitors, or prefer to transmit knowledge unchallenged. Ideally educators and curators would work together to facilitate the most effective learning environment. Correspondences exist between the MMG mode of working and the focus of recent work in the cultural sector prompted by the present government's prioritising of access in relation to the arts. This is examined further below.

9.4.2 Stage Two

Figure 9.2 Stage Two of the MMG framework



Stage two of the MMG framework is shown in Figure 9.2. Here the activities through which artist educators and learners engage with artworks are described. Dialogue remains central. As with the experiential learning cycle and Art Making Model, this process is cyclical. Meaning making is ongoing and although six discrete stages are identified, activities overlap and continuously inform the process.

The process 'begins' with learners and artist educators **engaging** with an artwork. This can be seen as the 'do' stage of the experiential learning model. Engagement takes place essentially through prolonged looking, although listening (in the case of audio or video pieces) and (less commonly) touching also happens. Learners' engagement can be stimulated through handling objects and supportive prompting

from the artist educator. At this stage the process is essentially private. This allows individual learners to develop initial ideas and responses, drawing on their experience and knowledge, which may bear no relation to other's interpretations.

Engagement is followed by **questioning**. Artist educators pose questions to learners to encourage further investigation. Learners also question each other, the artist educator and artwork and through this exchange, begin to **share knowledge**. At this stage the process becomes public. Ideas and views are explored within the group and against the artwork, with the artist educator providing contextual information and continuing to prompt learners. Through formulating individual interpretations and sharing them through dialogue, learners build a group understanding. This shared interpretation represents a broad consensus which accommodates individuals' varied meanings.

Whilst contributing ideas and knowledge, learners also reflect on activity and **review content**, or what they are learning (which equates to the 'review' stage in the experiential cycle). Within the group questions such as 'why might you think that?' prompt learners to consider privately how they have arrived at their interpretations, promoting engagement in the learning process. Within the group ideas are also evaluated more publicly, new concepts advanced and views altered and expanded.

Through this process of engaging, questioning, sharing knowledge and reviewing individuals **make meaning** within the group and in relation to the artwork. This resembles the 'learn' stage, since here learning is made explicit. Although responsibility for learning has been shared amongst all, each learner generates their own meaning through drawing on their existing experience, taking on the knowledge and understanding provided by others, and trying out their ideas against the artwork.

Meanings generated are neither fixed nor universal; they are always subject to revision. Learners gain provisional knowledge and understanding, which they can **apply** (as with the 'apply' stage in the experiential model). Meaning making is not

static; it enables learners to re-engage with the artwork on many levels and can be transferred to other learning situations. For instance insights gained into the relationship between artist and model through studying a nude portrait (such as Euan Uglow's 'Standing Nude' referenced in chapter six) can inform learners' subsequent engagements with other nude portraits or artworks generally. In this way the learning experience feeds into future action.

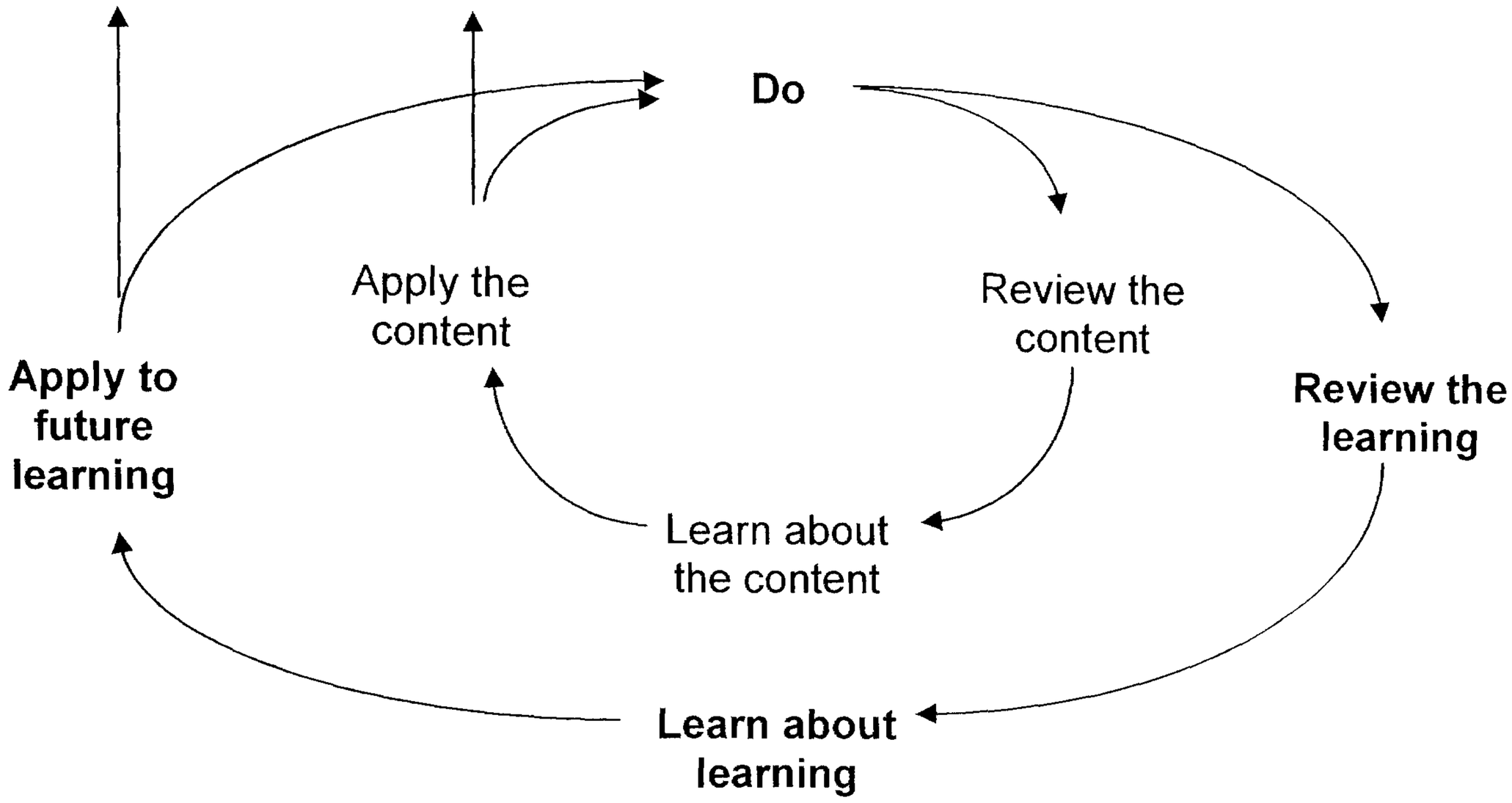
9.4.3 Stage Three

Enabling learners to apply their meaning making experience to other learning situations is a central component of gallery education programmes which aim to encourage visitors to engage with their collections and feel confident in the gallery. Artist educators seek to provide learners with interpretive strategies to enable them to make connections with artworks for themselves, in preference to providing particular interpretations of a work. In this latter scenario, learners may not easily transfer specific knowledge when examining art elsewhere and may not take responsibility for future learning.

The MMG framework as described so far outlines these strategies, how they are 'taught' and how learning can inform future action. Yet meanings arrived at through this process are typically connected to the artwork. Whilst learners may connect active learning tasks such as questioning and reviewing with the meanings generated, researchers have argued (Watkins *et al*, 2001) that focusing and reflecting on the learning process as well as content, provides learners with a richer conception of learning and a greater range of learning strategies. Reflection on the learning process, or meta-learning, can be seen as an additional activity connected to the original meaning making process. Here participants **review learning** activities to assess what was effective for them and gain greater understanding of how and why they learn. This they may apply to future learning.

Figure 9.4 identifies how meta-learning can be incorporated into the meaning making process in the gallery. I have drawn on Watkins *et al*'s meta-learning model (*Ibid*, 2001) (see figure 9.3).

Figure 9.3 A meta-learning model (Watkins et al, 2001)

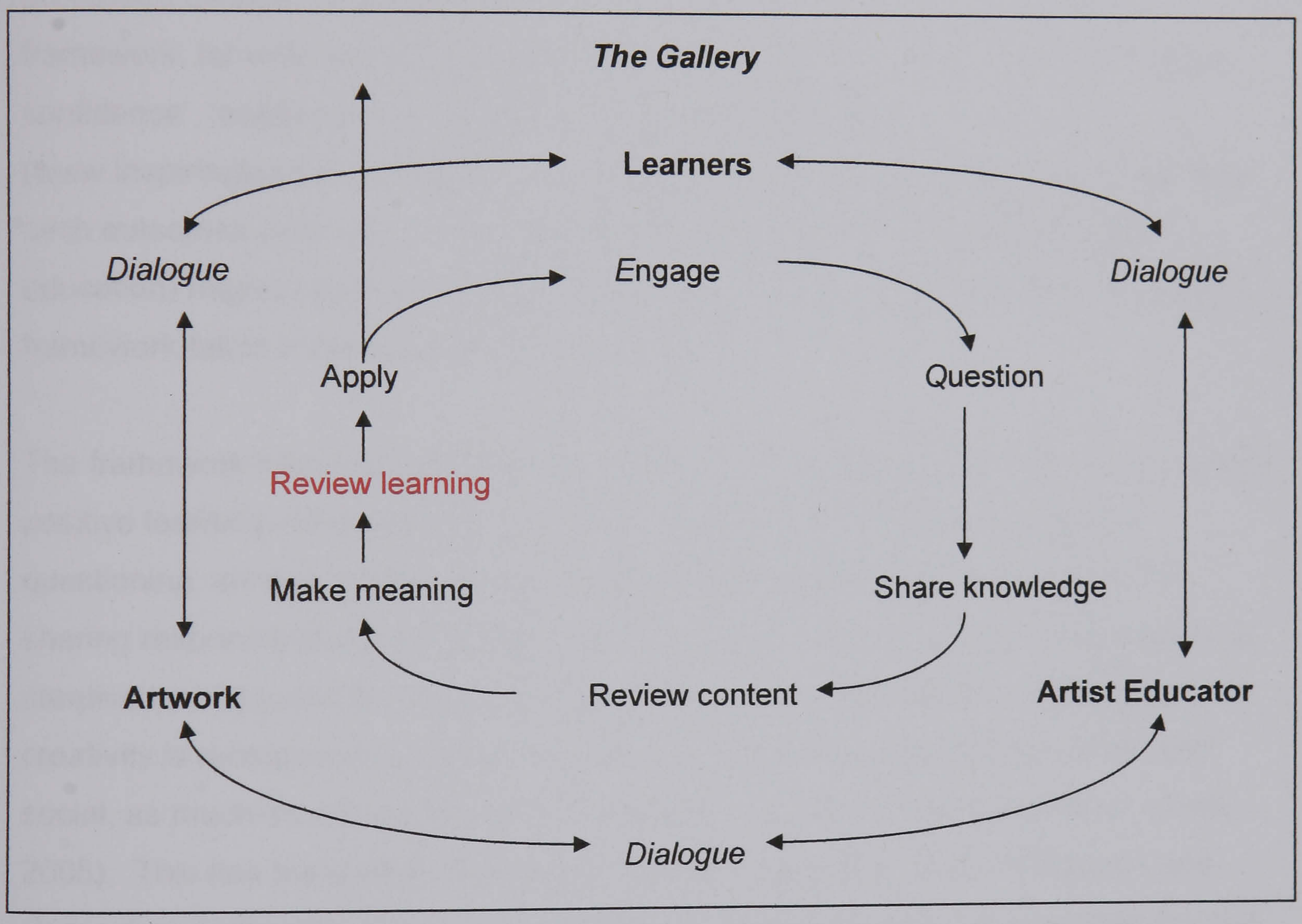


Initially in the MMG framework, as with Watkins *et al*'s model, I identified meta-learning as an additional cycle in the learning process operating alongside the existing learning cycle. However, I found it difficult to reconcile the primary engagement with the art object (which I see as the focus of learning) with what became an equal emphasis on the learning process itself. Dialogue in the MMG framework generates meanings around the art work predominantly. Too many interjections from the artist educator (who is unlikely to be skilled in facilitating meta-learning) would disrupt the group learning process, rather than enhance it. The key consideration of the learning process needed to be undertaken at a specific moment, rather than on an ongoing basis.

Therefore, although experienced facilitators and learners may review their learning throughout, meta-learning in the MMG framework is an additional stage (identified as 'review learning') that happens during a final plenary session. Here artist educator

and learners engage in dialogue around learning processes, rather than content. For instance, discussing with participants which activities undertaken they found most rewarding and why, or establishing where problems that inhibited their engagement arose. Participants can thus reflect on their learning and gain insights into how they learn, which helps them take responsibility for future learning. These activities equip learners to engage with artworks independently in the future.

Figure 9.4 Stage Three of the MMG Model



Following the review learning stage participants **apply** knowledge and understanding gained to develop new meanings about the object they have engaged with and artworks more widely. Additionally they have increased self-awareness as a learner which translates into greater confidence in negotiating the gallery and collection. Unfamiliarity with interpreting art can act as a barrier to cultural engagement; artworks can appear intimidating and impenetrable. But by becoming more conscious of

learning strategies employed effectively, learners can become confident, active and strategic in the gallery.

9.5 Implications raised by the thesis for gallery education practice and policy

Emerging from evidence presented in this thesis, the MMG framework outlines best practice for artist-led gallery education programmes aiming to further visitors' engagement with, and knowledge about, artworks. It makes meaning making processes explicit. Therefore, unlike the Generic Learning Outcomes (GLO) framework, for example, it does not measure impacts on learners, such as 'greater confidence', 'enjoyment' or 'enhanced knowledge and skills' (www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk). Instead the framework seeks to explicate why such outcomes (which are often cited in connection with this form of cultural education) might occur through participation in specific gallery activities. The MMG framework takes a learning-centred approach.

The framework has potential implications for wider pedagogic scenarios, where these positive learning outcomes are sought. The activities described; engaging, questioning, sharing knowledge and reviewing, alongside the emphasis on and sharing responsibility for learning between educator and learner are characteristic of creative teaching and learning (Prentice, 2000a). Furthermore the fostering of creativity is recognised by policy makers, who value the perceived economic and social, as much as cultural benefits, of a flexible and autonomous workforce (Craft, 2005). This has translated into specific initiatives including the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's (QCA) 'creativity project' (www.ncaction.org.uk/creativity) that investigated creativity in the classroom and Creative Partnerships, the government's flagship creativity programme (www.creative-partnerships.com).

However within these initiatives relatively little research addresses artistic pedagogy and how this practice exemplifies aspects of creative teaching. This thesis provides evidence of what artist educators' perceive their expertise consists of and how they

employ this with learners. The connections identified between artistic practice and teaching and learning as forms of making meaning also indicate why artists engage with learners as they do. In addition the thesis reveals contradictions between how artists perceive they teach with the experience in the gallery and potential barriers to collaborative methodologies. In so doing these findings, alongside the MMG framework, draw attention to the complexity of artist-led pedagogy, whilst highlighting how this practice can engender positive benefits to learners.

Positive benefits cited by policy makers include greater social inclusion, yet little evidence emerged that these research participants actively seek to enable this. Two issues are relevant here. First, rather than adhering to a prescribed social and cultural policy agenda that arguably inculcates learners into a middle class 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1979), the artist educators' practice reveals some legacies of community arts practice as described in chapter one. In particular, there are indications that these practitioners position learners, not as requiring the redemptive and improving influence of the cultural institution, but rather as active and critical makers of meaning.

Second is the extent to which an institution such as Tate can or should be tasked with directly addressing broad social agendas. Policy makers aspire to tackle educational achievement, employment prospects, health and crime through encouraging those at risk from social exclusion to engage with museums and galleries (DCMS, 2000). Yet evidence here indicates that Tate's curators and educators perceive learners' self-esteem and critical consciousness may rise through involvement with the gallery, but it is beyond the remit of these community education sessions to fundamentally affect participants' social and economic conditions. Questions surface, therefore, as to whether such policy aspirations with regard to cultural institutions such as Tate are at best limited and, more pessimistically, unrealistic and potentially unrealisable.
By revealing the expectations and practices of artist educators, the thesis contributes to debates on what gallery education can reasonably achieve. Whereas policy rhetoric dictates wholesale social or educational change is desirable, research participants' comments and my observations indicate that it is in the details of the

practice and on the scale of the individual that shifts in attitudes and modes of meaning making are sought and achieved. Further research focusing on specific participants' engagement with the learning process outlined is needed, however, to enable clarification of the extent that artist-led practice supports current policy agendas.

9.6 Taking a meta-level approach; reflecting on the research process and future developments

My experiences as a PhD researcher have added to my understanding of the subject, but also caused me to question previously held ideas about artists and their practice as educators. My insights into connections between artistic practice, research and teaching and learning have been outlined above. In addition, through interrogating research participants' preconceptions about teachers and art historians my perceptions of the professions and how different practices overlap has changed. Over the course of this research I have become increasingly aware of the value, but also the limitations of artist-led pedagogy. I also see more clearly how it operates (and is validated) in relation to other education practices in the gallery and beyond.

The research has provided me with insights into wider pedagogy. I am now in a position where I 'teach' the subject of artist-led pedagogy, commonly to peers in the museum and gallery sector. Having undertaken this thesis I am increasingly uncomfortable with the lecture as an effective pedagogic form, conforming as it does to the transmission model. However my attempts to shift teaching and learning into more co-constructive modes have sometimes met with resistance from participants, who appear to prefer instruction by an 'expert' to engagement in more active, collaborative learning. I have begun to speculate whether the continuing dominance of the transmission model from early formal education onwards makes it harder for individuals to take responsibility for, and participate fully in, their subsequent learning in adulthood. This in turn has led me to value more highly my education experiences

at art school, where emphasis was resolutely placed on active and creative meaning making.

Although I see strengths in my research methodology, I am also aware of what some may see as drawbacks; in particular my concentration on a small number of artist educators and the community education programme in one institution. Certain outstanding questions have been identified above; a few remain unanswered because of lack of interview data. One issue with conducting such focused research has been the number of interviewees, particularly in relation to my question regarding the influence of the gallery context. During the latter stages of data analysis I recognised that a wider range of interview subjects, including a greater number of curators, would have provided a clearer sense of the institutional perspective. I also became aware of the insights a comparative study of artist-led practice in other UK and international galleries would have afforded. Yet this broadening of the research would have necessarily drawn attention away from the detailed interrogation of the relationship between artistic practice and pedagogy which remains my central research question.

I do not regret omitting learners from this research study. I remain convinced that interviews with participants would not have made a sufficient contribution to examining the research questions, which focus on artist educators' perspectives. However, I hope to build on this research in the future by examining the perceptions of participants (group leaders, teachers and learners) in equal detail.

I also intend disseminating the MMG framework to colleagues. A 'Learning Theory Seminar' I co-ordinated for education staff at the Victoria and Albert Museum on October 4th 2007 highlighted how the framework can inform practice, yet may find resistance within museum education scenarios that prioritise knowledge acquisition over learner engagement. These discussions with colleagues from outside contemporary gallery education proved mutually beneficial and I plan further presentations beyond the sector (for example at the Association of Art Historians'

conference in March 2008). I will also disseminate the findings in various publications.

The thesis advances current understanding around artist-led pedagogy. It provides new insights into the ways artists work in education contexts and how artistic practice shapes engagement between artists, learners and artworks. The thesis draws attention to creative processes of making meaning. As such, the findings are relevant for gallery educators, artists, educationalists and policy makers who are developing creative teaching and learning programmes and who seek to comprehend how and why artists function as educators.

The thesis has enhanced my understanding of artist-led practice and informed my future actions. I have examined my practice and reflected on my learning processes, most valuably through conversations with colleagues. At the start of my research much of my practical knowledge, as artist and educator, was tacit. This thesis represents the process of making that implicit knowledge explicit. Moreover, the artist educators commented during interviews that talking with me had encouraged them to reflect on, and articulate, the characteristics of their practice and own learning strategies. This was something they were not in the habit of doing, largely because opportunities did not often arise. This suggests that the interview process became a means of making their implicit knowledge explicit; their tacit knowledge public. It also indicates that the thesis was a vehicle for instigating a meta-learning process not only for me, but for these practitioners also. I look forward to building on my positive experiences of this participatory meaning making process in the future.

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Appendix One

Artist Educators' Biographies

Liz Ellis

Summary

My practice as a visual artist is informed by the following principles

- My belief in the central role that the arts can play in developing human potential across age and culture.
- My skills in making links with everyday life and the arts, engaged participation is core to all aspects of my practice
- My experience and skills in collaborating across disciplines and in partnership with a range of public, private and voluntary organisations.
- My expertise in a range of media and sensitivity towards site and audience

My work is represented on www.axisartists.org.uk.
A recent participatory project (May 2007) can be seen on www.artillery.org.uk/index

Education

2003 Stage 2 Certificate 7307 City and Guilds Adult Education
1995-6 MA Fine Art Central St Martins
1983-8 BA Hons Fine Art/Critical studies St Martins School of Art

Selected exhibitions

2007 'No Artist is an Island' participatory project London, exploring local and international politics of water
2006 Vestry House Museum, London 'Notes in the Margin', photo-series exploring role of non conformity in historical and contemporary society
2004 House Gallery London 'Out of Sight'
2004-6 Gardens of Easton Lodge Essex Sculpture Trail, brass site- specific sculpture/text and artist led walk event
2003 Wexford, Ireland International Artists Book Exhibition
2002 East London Photography Festival
2001 Art Fair, Dominic Berning Gallery, Islington, London
2000 Standpoint Gallery London 'left field' 3 person exhibition,
1999 FPAC Boston USA 'Personal Effects' 3 person exhibition,
1997/8 Touring exhibition of artists books, Ireland, England, France
1994 Photographic works commissioned for national 'Signals' tour
1992 Metalwork and prints, Cologne Contemporary Art Fair, Germany

Commissions and Residencies

2004-5 ; photoworks residency Brighton/Julia Margaret Cameron Trust, Isle of Wight. A significant aspect of this residency was my planning and development of artist- led walks as part of the annual IoW Walking festival. All events booked out.
2002 'politics of Hoxton' photo-text posters bought as series by Hackney Council

2001 Arts Council funded 'Artists in Sites of Learning' Birmingham
2000 Whitechapel Art Gallery printmaking residency
1999 'Petty Crimes' solo exhibition, curated by Panchayat, Central St Martins School of Art
1994 Riverside Health Authority, photographs and drawings
1993 National Museum of Labour History and Cornerhouse Gallery, Manchester, joint residency working with collection and running adult workshop programme
1989 Artist in residence Banstead psychiatric hospital

Conferences/ international panels; guest speaker

2007 Documenta, Kassel Germany , invited to speak to international, multi-disciplinary audience on my integration of artist and educator role
2005 Federal Academy of Cultural education/AdKV, Lower Saxony, Germany, invited to speak on role of Community programme at Tate Modern
2005 Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin Artists panel
2004 Stuttgart Germany 'Soft Logics' conference

Awards

2008 Essex Arts award to research develop and exhibit photo-based and participatory work with 3 partner organisations in Essex
2005 CIDA,London Creative Business award
2002 City of Westminster Photography Bursary
1998 British Council Grants to Artists award
1998 Wimbledon School of Art Research Award to develop and distribute artist photo publication prior to Boston USA exhibition

Publications and learning resources

2006 chapter in 'New forms of Arts Education' Bundesakedemie, Wolfenbuttel, Germany
2005 'Museums and Society' autumn issue, Dr Jean Barr, cites my work as example of arts /education good practice
2003-4 chapter in 'Tillandsien, Soft Logics' Kunstlerhaus,Stuttgart
2002 Artists Newsletter article and photo from East London Photo Festival;
2002 'engage' magazine, a critique of Institute of Ideas and the backlash to access programmes in gallery education
1999-2007 content developer/writer of wide range of online Tate resources, including www.tate.org.uk/valueart
1998 'n.paradoxa' 'Do you want to be in my gang?' a critical response to the debate around young British artists and an ethical response to their work
1994 'Casablanca' magazine 'Some People Are Too Soft' concertina book

Employment ; Work with public sector organisations including arts, education and health

2006-2008 Curator (p/t) Community programme Interpretation and Education Tate Modern. Develop training programme for health staff in using TM as a learning resource
2005-6 Artist Educator, Turner Contemporary Margate, 2 year project developing new audiences, employment and education opportunities in Margate.
2002 -continuous Board of Trustees, Corali Dance Company, London

1999 - continuous Artist Educator Tate Modern ,Community Programme working with wide range of adult audiences including MSc students, City University with Hanna Weir, City University lecturer
1998-9 Lecturer BA/MA Fine Art Central St Martins/Camberwell School of Art
1997-9 Lecturer (Photography) Farnham School of Art
1995-7 Lecturer (Photography) Wimbledon School of Art
1995 onwards Lecturer/workshop leader Tate Britain working with special schools, youth projects, also vulnerable adults and adult education students
1995 onwards Fine Art Lecturer, City Lit Adult Education Institute, regular assessor/evaluator of portfolios for BA/MA applications
1992-9 Lecturer in a wide range of art galleries including Barbican Art Gallery, Whitechapel Art gallery and Hayward Gallery
1979-82 Registered Mental health Nurse, Staff nurse ,Maudsley Hospital

Work with non-specialist arts audiences
2001 - continuous Co-ordinated professional development and NVQ 3 validated course for health /housing staff using the Tate Modern/Britain collections as a learning resource.
2000 –continuous Regular lecturer for Corporate Events, Tate Modern
2000 - continuous, Tate Modern partnership with Kings Fund programme 'Enhancing the Healing environment' working with senior managers, nurses, service users etc in planning and developing use of the arts in hospitals/ health centres.

Trustee and Board member
2002-2008 Corali Dance company, London, responsible for development of Business plans 2002-2010, development of education policy
2003-2008 Portugal Prints Project Review Panel (member organisation of Westminster MIND) providing expertise on raising profile and partnership working .
Honorary appointment
2008-2011 Honorary Senior Lecturer City University, London with Dept of Psychosocial Science

michèle fuirer – visual artist

Professional Qualifications

M A in Fine Art	*University of Central England, UK*	1992
M Phil by Thesis	*University of Birmingham, UK*	1989
B A English / Fine Art	*University of Exeter, UK*	1979

One Person Exhibitions

Photographers' Gallery, London, 'Laid Table' a collaboration	2003
Whitechapel Art Gallery, foyer space, photography/text	1999
Café Gallery, London, sculpture and video	1995
The Bond Gallery, Birmingham, video installation	1995

Selected Group Exhibitions

Performance at John Cage 'Musicircus', Barbican Arts Centre, London	2004
CURIO site specific commission for Hanbury Street, London E1	2002
Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin (video screening)	2001
The Ark Project 2000, Berlin/London at Dilston Grove Gallery 2000	
Bankside Browser – Tate Modern, London	1999
PriceWaterhouseCooper, London, Open House	1998
Selected by jury for Videomedeja, International Video Summit, Novi Sad, Yugoslavia	1997
New Visions '96, Glasgow International Festival, video screening	1996

Media used

Photography, video, printmaking, sculpture and installation

Artist in Education / Gallery Education

Tate Modern, Artist Educator, Education & Interpretation Dept, 1999 – present;

Also Education work for Serpentine, Hayward and Whitechapel Art Gallery and British Library.

Writing published in

Feminist Art News, Ten.8 International Photography Magazine, National Arts Education Journal, Screen (Film Magazine).

Michaela Ross

EDUCATION

1983-86	BA Hons English/ History of Art (2:1), University of York
1987-91	Degree in Fine Art: Painting, Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze, Italy
1992-93	Postgraduate Certificate: Printmaking, Il Bisonte Scuola Internazionale di Arte Grafica, Florence, Italy
2002-03	MA Painting, Wimbledon School of Art
2005	Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education in Art, Design and Communication *(PgCert),* University of the Arts London
2005-present	PHD Research, Chelsea College of Art and Design

EXPERIENCE

2001-present	ARTIST-TUTOR, Tate Modern, London Tutor for MA Module: *Contemporary Art, Identity and Pedagogy* in partnership with Goldsmiths College, London Tutor for Artist-Teacher Scheme, Summer Institute, and Teacher Study Days Tutor for MA Module: *Inside Today's Museum* in partnership with Kings College, London
1997-2001	ARTIST-EDUCATOR, Tate Liverpool Working for Schools and Colleges, Family and Community Programmes
1999-2000	EDUCATION CURATOR (Acting), Adult and Community Programme, Tate Liverpool
1995-97	LECTURER IN CRITICAL STUDIES, City College Manchester
1992-93	LECTURER IN PRINTMAKING, University Exchange Programmes, Scuola Lorenzo de' Medici, Florence

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS, PROJECTS & AWARDS

2005-08	Scholarship for Postgraduate Research at Chelsea College of Art and Design (PHD Thesis: 'The artist as educator in institutional contexts')
2005-2007	Artist-researcher, Serpentine Gallery, London
2005-06	Artist in residence, (Arts Council) Doncaster Museum and Cannon Hall, Barnsley
2005	*Biblio* Triangle Space, Chelsea
2003	*Choices, Choices* De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill
2002	Residency, KHN Center for the Arts, Nebraska US
2000	*Phenomena*, Bankley Gallery, Manchester
2000	*Proof*, Smithhalls Hall, Bolton
1993	Italian Government Scholarship for Postgraduate Study in Printmaking, Il Bisonte, Florence

OTHER PROJECTS & EXPERIENCE

Lead artist with *CAPE*, Manchester

Collaborations with *Creative Partnerships* Hastings and E. Sussex

Freelance workshops and events at *Whitworth Gallery* Manchester, *Cornerhouse* Manchester, *Castlefield Gallery* Manchester, *Turnpike Gallery* Leigh, *De La Warr Pavilion Bexhill*, *British Library*, *Serpentine*, *Whitechapel*, *Camden Arts Centre*, *Café Gallery* Bermondsey, *Hayward Gallery*

WRITING/ RESOURCES

http://www.muesdesign.com/html/print/install_edu.htmlRoss, M. *Intercultural Learning in the Gallery. Responses: intercultural drawing practice.* Cornerhouse, 2001

Magnificent Materials and Material Stories, 2002. Resource for out-of-hours projects examining the use of materials in modern and contemporary art.

Activities for Matisse-Picasso Poster Pack, Tate Modern, 2002

Ross, M., Hancock, R. and Bagnall, K. *Pedagogy in a Public Space*. Symposium Journals, 2003 http://www.wwwords.co.uk/forum/content/pdfs/46/issue46_1.asp

Activities for Cornelia Parker's 'Cold Dark Matter', Tate website 2003
http://www.tate.org.uk/colddarkmatter
Installation Pack, Resource for Tate Modern, 2004
http://www.muesdesign.com/html/print/install_edu.html
Activities *for Edward Hopper Teachers' Pack*, Tate Modern, 2004

Resource Pack, Unilever International Schools Art Project, 2003 - 2005

3-D Project Display, Content/ Project Management, Unilever International Schools Art Project, Tate Modern, 2005
http://www.muesdesign.com/html/expo/unilever.html
26 Letters: A Creative Guide, Resource for the British Library, 2005

Activity Pack for Universal Experience: Art, Life and the Tourist's Eye, Hayward Gallery, 2005

Teachers Pack for the De La Warr Pavilion, 2005
http://www.dlwp.com/education/Resources.htm
H. Charman and M. Ross, M. *Contemporary Art and the Role of Interpretation*, Tate Papers, 2005. http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/museology.jsp
Activities for Portraits and Portraiture, Wallace Collection, 2006
http://www.museumnetworkuk.org/portraits
Contributor to *The Art Gallery Handbook*. Ed. H. Charman, K. Rose and G. Wilson. Tate, 2006

Esther Sayers

Qualifications:

1994-95	MA Fine Art Staffordshire University
1989-93	BA (Hons) 3D Design Brighton University
1988-89	Art & Design Foundation Middlesex Polytechnic

Employment:

2002 - ongoing	Curator: Youth Programmes Tate Modern
2005-2006	Lead Curator for Young Tate
2004 – 2005	Curator: School and Youth Programmes, Tate Modern
2000 - 2004	Lecturer (Part-time), Loughborough University History of Art & Design with Studio Practice
2000 - 2004	Artist Educator, Tate Modern Schools, InSET, Community and Youth programmes
2000 - 2001	Special Projects Co-ordinator, Camden Arts Centre
1998-00	Education Assistant, Camden Arts Centre
1996-99	Gallery Educator, Tate Liverpool
1998	Delivering training seminars for artists to lead workshops in schools, Continuing Vocational Education Course
1998	Valuing the Arts for Shropshire County Council Workshops in schools and INSET
1995-97	Lecturer (part-time), Staffordshire University BA Hons Fine Art and BA Hons Visual Arts
1994+98	Printmaking Teacher Adult Printmaking Classes - Borderline Printmakers
1995+96	Coordinating artist, Market Drayton Youth Group

Professional experience:

2000-2007	Executive commitee member MAKE - the organisation for Women in the Arts
2006	Museums Association member Conference delegate, Bournemouth
2004	European funding stakeholders development workshop Austria
2003	Digital learning in museums – short course Goldsmiths University
2000	Artist advisory panel, CPLEX, West Midlands
2001 – 2003	Treasurer (studio), East London Printmakers

Visiting lecturer/speaker:

2007	Youth Matters conference – keynote, Audiences for London
2004 + 2006	London Consortium, Museums and Galleries course
2003	Art in Education, Taipei, Taiwan
2003	Engage seminar series
2002	DCMS conference, Fresh Perspectives
2002	Butler Art Gallery, Kilkeny, Ireland
2000	Middlesex University, Photography tutor (visiting)
2000	Light House Media Centre, Mapping Art Practices symposium

1999	Staffordshire University, professional practice programme
1999	Middlesex University, contemporary practice talk and non-silver processes demonstration
1998	Public Art Forum
1998, 99, 00	Westminster University, contemporary women's photography
1997	City Limits Conference, Staffordshire University
1996	Head First conference, Derby University

Collaborations and residencies:

2002-2003	Creative Ambitions Award (with Peppy Hills) West Midlands Arts
2002 - 2003	Us and the Other (with Janet Hodgson) Collaborative video piece for Tate Modern
2000-2003	From Space to Place Public Art in Special Needs Schools for Warwickshire CC
1999-2000	Journeys - video installation at Swiss Cottage Library with Anthony O'Flaherty, Claudia Kappenberg and Deaf community, Co-ordinated by Camden Arts Centre
1998-2000	Materialisations (w/Asa Andersson, Marsha Meskimmon) Coextensive theory/practise project and exhibition
1996-1997	Twin Peeks Public Art Project (Paul Callaghan, Stefani Scheider, Phil Sayers) Research & Development for UK and Seimens, Germany
1997	Commissioned work Valuing the Arts, Shropshire County Council
1996	Photography Commission Rural Links Scheme
1995	Artist in Residence Iceland Frozen Foods, Stoke on Trent Permanent Sculpture Commission (with Lynn Sampson) Oakhill Primary School, Stoke On Trent
1994	Visual Arts Bursary, West Midlands Arts

Publications included in:

2000	Make magazine April/May 2000
1999	Nexus: Palpable Signs (vol.6)
1997	Nexus : Engendering the City (vol.1) Iris Women's Photography Project (Scarlet Press, 1997)
1996	The Art of Reflection: Womens' Self Portraiture in the Twentieth Century Marsha Meskimmon (Scarlet Press, 1996), Chapter 3 - illustration and text Make; The Magazine for Women's Art October 96

Group exhibitions:

2002	Natural Spaces	Bond Gallery, London
	Urban Colour	Cowcross Gallery, London
	Lilla Europa 2002	Hallsberg & Orebro, Sweden
2001	Create>East London	Princes Foundation, Shoreditch
	Open studio show	Bow Arts Trust, London
	Identity	Mac Centre, Birmingham
2000	A Woman's Realm	Pleiades Gallery, Athens, Greece
	East London Printmakers	The Foundry EC2
	Materialisations	Lighthouse Media Centre
	Chronos - ein Tag	Nurnberg, Germany

1999	East London Printmakers	Hidden Art of Hackney
		Spike Island, Bristol
1998	Materialisations	Real Gallery, New York, NY
1997	Barriers	ASPEX, Portsmouth
1996	The Shadow of the Object	Ikon Touring Exhibition
	Warming Up!	Nurnberg, Germany
	City Limits	Staffordshire University
1995	A Question of Identity (with Phil Sayers)	
		Keele University, Staffordshire
	The New Contemporaries	Anglo-Taiwan Education Centre, Taiwan
	Identity	Manhattan Graphics Center, New York
	Women, Time and Space	Lancaster University
	All Creations Great and Small	The Gateway, Shrewsbury
	Inside/Outside	Konst forum, Norrköping, Sweden
	MA Show	Staffordshire University,
1994	Citizens with Citizenship & Cultural	Frontiers Conference
		Staffordshire University
	8th Stoke Open	City Museum and Art Gallery
	Open Print	Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham

Solo Exhibitions:

1998	A Partial View	Shropshire Arts Trust Touring Exhibition
1997	Transmutation	Flaxman Gallery Staffordshire Uni.
1996	Identi-kit	The Music Hall, Shrewsbury
		Watershed Media Centre, Bristol
		The Wicker Room, Stafford

Lucy Wilson

Short Biography

Educated

- Godolphin & Latymer School
- University of York English & Related Literature

Theatre/TV Work 1978-1986

- Kaboodle/Theatre Exchange Physical/Visual Theatre
  Performances toured around Great Britain, Europe & Canada with subsidies and grants from GLAA, the Arts Council and British Council. Also taught at residencies in Colleges of Higher Education in Crewe & Alsager, Exeter, Barking, Manchester & Newcastle.
- Metro Theatre Company Director Mark Dornford May
- Granada TV Sherlock Holmes Series amongst other small parts
- Set up my own Storytelling Company

Gallery Education 1984-present day

- Worked alongside Sue Clive MBE initially in the North West but consequently around Great Britain bringing groups in to Galleries and making exhibitions accessible through drama activities, literacy activities, movement and sketchbook
- Worked in conjunction with the Arts Council Southbank touring exhibitions organized by Helen Luckett
- Built up relationships with Eastbourne, Serpentine and other small London Galleries
- Joined the freelance education team at Tate (now Tate Britain) 1993 and introduced a more Ludic approach to the department. Co artist/worker on the outreach project "Candle in the Wind " Opera performed at St Johns Smith Square.
- Artist/ worker on three projects for St Martins in the Fields Orchestra
- One of the founder members of the Art trolley and an original Trolley Dolly!
- Member of the Core Team Tate Modern 2000-2008 working in both Schools and Community departments as well as working for the Development & Sponsorship departments. Co Founder/worker for the START programme. Delivered several Raw Canvas Courses
- Wallace Collection/Tuke Special School programme 2003-8
- Co-Invented the Flux Takeaway Activity for the Long weekend 2008

Alongside my Gallery Education work I manage properties, (no roof too high, no sewer too deep)

Appendix Two
Original Research Questions
March 2004

1. How do particular artists understand themselves as practitioners, in terms of the skills, knowledge and experiences that they possess?
2. How do these artists perceive they draw on their knowledge, skills and experience when engaging with artworks and learners in the context of community education sessions in the gallery?
3. In what ways does the relationship between the artists' attributes and their pedagogic activities constitute a particular teaching and learning experience in the gallery.
4. To what extent does this teaching and learning experience correspond to existing pedagogic models?
5. How is the nature of the engagement between the artists, the learners and the artworks in a community education session in the gallery informed by broader concerns including the nature of the gallery in which they are working and the wider socio-political and theoretical climate?

Appendix Three

QUESTIONS FOR ARTISTS IN SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS.

2003

1. How would you begin to define yourself as an artist?

2. What particular knowledge and/or experience do you consider that you possess as an artist?

3. To what extent do you draw on that particular knowledge and/or experience when working with groups within the gallery?

4. What other knowledge and/or experience do you draw on when working with groups in the gallery?

5. What do you consider that you are 'teaching' participants within the gallery?

6. How do you consider that you are 'teaching' participants within the gallery?

7. To what extent do you consider that what you do and how you do it are affected by the context within which you are working?

8. To what extent does the nature of the participants that you are working with affect the way you work with them?

An Attempt at distilling the art making process.

Please note: generalisations have been made. We do not see the as definitive!

* - all the time there are sparks of thought, links made, ideas, moments of inspiration that the artist must remain open to!

WARNING! It's easy to be distracted by the blue arrows. Sometimes it's important to follow them but it's very important to keep going down the red ones which is also sometimes harder!!

ATTENTION! There might be many concurrent strands of interest/curiosity that may/may not link, don't let this alarm you!

Interest / curiosity

Generates more

Stop & look
Observe

Generates more

Generates more

Generates more

Gather information / data / stuff
Collect
Re-present ⇒ drawing / photography / casting / footage / put in log / write description / video / record sound

might have to go back here!

Sort / order / review / discuss / drink tea.

PROCESS

Transformation

re-present again

re-contextualise

ALWAYS THINK!
→What are the possibilities?
→I might be mistaken!
But..... don't forget to ACT as well. ON YOUR IDEAS

This doesn't have to be the end or a conclusion, it can be a set of questions and beginnings!

BIRKBECK LONDON UNIVERSITY